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UNDEFEATED  
BAHAMUT  
CHRONICLE

# 最弱無敗の神装機龍

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GA文庫

# Saijaku Muhai no Bahamut

vol.17

by Akatsuki Senri

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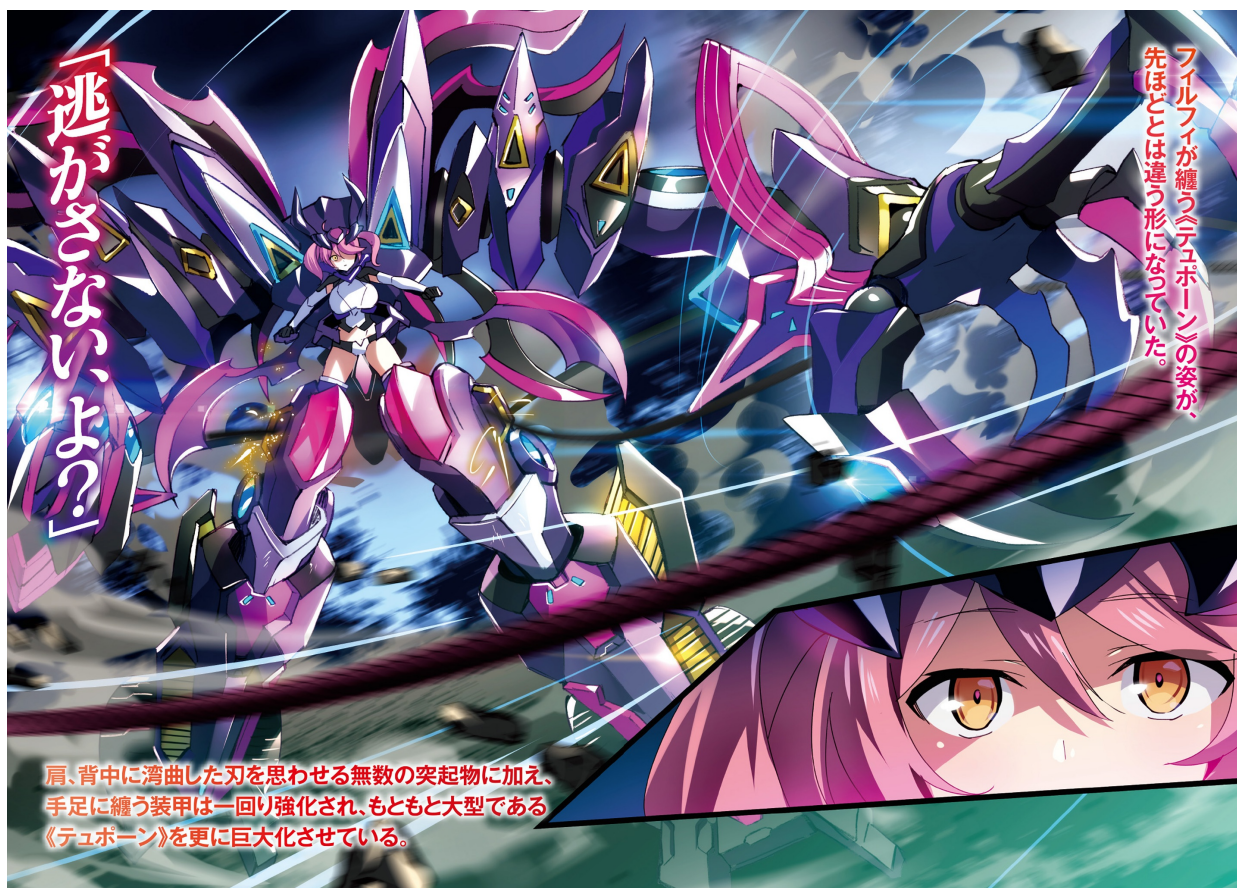






懐かしい匂いと体温、心臓の鼓動が直に伝わる。

「ねえ、兄さん。  
もう少し側にいてもいいですか？  
子供の頃みたいに」





# **Prologue – The Day The Hero Was Born**

# Part 1

When was the beginning of everything?

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Was it since social position that differentiated fellow human into royalty and commoner, or perhaps slave was invented?

Or perhaps it was more primitive, since two different existences were born?

.

—Arcadia Empire that accepted the clan of Xfer in the past of more than a millennium ago climbed to the top with the power of Ruins and reigned there, but at the same time it stepped into the path toward destruction.

The influential people who obtained achievements at the beginning eventually turned their fang toward their compatriots who were in weaker position.

—Elixir.

It was proved that the optimum raw materials for the secret medicine that awakened the sleeping potential of human and strengthened them were human with close blood relationship. Since then the exploitation of life itself began.

And then even the people of Arcadia Empire who got oppressed continuously one day reached the limit of their patience and began a rebellion.

The resistance force of Arcadia Empire.

That force was called as [the clan of traitor] by the imperial family and nobility. At the surface they were called as [evil] who disturbed the

country's peace because of their greed for wealth.

Fugil in that past of more than a thousand years ago was the son of a certain man of such [clan of traitor].

The battle using Drag-Ride was extremely gruesome for both camps.

It was a chain of hatred that was produced from desire for revenge.

The weak people who were dragged in.

Within the chaos that was boiling like the cauldron of hell, Fugil encountered a single girl.

.



## Part 2

And then—currently it was the middle of night in the new kingdom.

A single man was looking up to the jet black sky on a terrace that was jutting out from the castle.

"—Hey, Fugil. Why did you help those dogs and cats?"

The main body of that Sacred Eclipse was possessing the queen of the new kingdom Raffi Atismata.

But, right now while Raffi consciousness was sleeping, the figure of Sacred Eclipse itself appeared in front of Fugil once more.







"....."

The figure of Arshalia who he had continued to see many times more than a thousand years ago.

The beloved woman who he was unable to save.

Sacred Eclipse was a system that read human's emotion and projected that feeling.

It sympathized with human's despair and resentment and granted them the power of Elixir.

The humanoid Ragnarok that was created by Arshalia in order to save the weak.

In the past, it sensed and read Fugil's heart and showed in front of him many times.

The expression of the girl, the questioning words, they were repeated for thousands, tens of thousands of times, seeping into Fugil's eyes and ears.

"You fought against your own desire and calculating thought. You even threw away yourself to save the weak. Actually you aren't a horrible human like everyone is saying. You're actually a kind person who is unable to overlook someone in trouble. I believe that you are someone who possess the courage to fight for the sake of someone else."

The existence who was called as heresy even among the imperial princesses of Arcadia Empire.

Fugil met Arshalia for the first time at a back alley of the castle town.

No, perhaps it should be called as her talking to him one-sidedly.

The weak animals that were turned into target for violence from the masses as outlet for their dissatisfaction.

The girl coincidentally saw from a nearby building the figure of Fugil standing on the way of people in order to protect them.

Later, when the girl called Arshalia slipped out of the castle and came once more, she called out to Fugil.

The girl, Arshalia was the youngest daughter among the seven imperial princesses at that time, but she had a special talent since she was a child.

The engineering skill to read and understand the advanced technology possessed by the Xfer, learned it, and then applied her own invention to it.

After the empire reigned on the top of the world, the development of Ruins stagnated for more than a hundred years. But this girl made new development in less than several years.

If she wasn't the star of hope who was burdened with the responsibility for the future generation of the imperial family, her willfulness to pick a man who was originally from the enemy the clan of traitor and turned him into her servant wouldn't be allowed.

However, Fugil who was summoned to the castle was doubting Arshalia.

He was unable to understand her action of placing the child of a resistance member from the clan of traitor at her side.

"—What a foolish woman. Are you intending to save me due to your whimsical good will? I cannot understand what are you doing at all."

The young man Fugil who was led to the castle in the form of getting half abducted told that to the imperial princess whose eyes were sparkling while looking at him.

Imperial family and commoner were existences with conflicting interest.

They were existences that hated, feuded, and killed each other.

Fugil who was living with such unwavering belief had his gaze stolen by her smile.

"Is it meaningless? I don't think so. Then let me ask you, why did you save those tortured dogs and cats? You even risked your own wellbeing against adult opponents until you were all battered for that."

"A whim..... I simply disliked those guys."

"I'm feeling the same! We are suited with each other."

Fugil averted his gaze with a sulky look. In contrast the imperial princess called Arshalia replied with a bright smile.

"You....., is something wrong with your head? That must be the case..... I am your enemy you know?"

"Why? Who in the world decided such thing? You are my servant from now on. Come now, let's get along well with each other."

The girl calmly held out her hand. In respond Fugil sighed in exasperation.

That was his meeting with Arshalia that began more than a thousand years ago.

It was the beginning of hope for Fugil.

.

And then, it was also the endlessly continuing despair's—.



# **Chapter 1 – Azure Division**

## Part 1

"This is sudden but I have something important to say. It's fine even if it's just for a bit, just listen."

The New Year parade at the royal capital Lordgalia had ended safely. It was the next morning after a day of rest.

The students of the Academy including the Syvalles planned to return to Cross Field.

Lisha arrived using horse carriage to the high class inn that was reserved for Lux and others.

No, it wasn't just Lisha. Krulcifer, Philuffy, Celis, Yoruka, in addition even the Triad and Airi, everyone were gathering at the entrance of the inn at the first floor.

"Eh, don't tell me Lisha-sama. This is the love confession thing? Could it be you and Lux-chi——.....muguh!"

Tillfur tried to poke fun like that, but Noct's hand blocked her mouth in the middle while Sharis pinioned her from behind.

They sensed that it wasn't time to say joke.

"The next day after the parade, a threatening letter was sent to Hahaue—her majesty queen Raffi. The sender was a bunch called Azure Division."

"Azure Division.....? I've never heard that organization's name but, Princess Lisha. What in the world——"

Sharis who was also a daughter of the army's vice commander immediately asked, but Lisha let out a slight sigh.

"I don't know. It's also my first time hearing the organization's name, but we're considering that most likely they are a group of bandit formed of

Drag-Knights similar like the Dragon Marauder. Those guys stole Grand Force from the Garden during the parade, at the same time they also kidnapped Aeril who was at the Academy."

"\_\_\_\_\_"

\*Murmur\*. Tension ran through all the students who were still in the mood of parade or languid from hangover.

The existence of Grand Force was a confidential information, but the students were also told about it.

It was a large crystal with super high degree of purity that was an item to activate Ruin, and one of the seven keys for controlling Avalon completely.

The students were shaken hearing the situation that it was stolen.

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"Lies..... How can there is still enemy even after we have fought that much....."

"Aeril is also kidnapped, isn't this actually really bad?"

"A threatening letter for her majesty, just what in the world——?"

.

The disturbing news erased the joy of the victory celebration and clouded the faces of the students.

But, Lisha puffed up her chest with a resolute attitude.

"Don't be flustered. We are military cadet and exist in order to support the New Kingdom military of the future generation. Besides the appearance of new enemy is common when managing a country. But, right now even the New Kingdom is lacking in battle strength. Because of that during the time until the true identity of Azure Division is exposed, we Syvalles will stay here. For the moment the plan is for us to go back as soon as we have

bright prospects, but during that time I'll leave Cross Field in everyone's hand. Naturally you all mustn't say any word of this to anyone else."

Lisha concluded like that, and then the headmaster Relie told everyone of the plan from here on formally.

The announced plan was that the stay of Syvalles in the royal capital was extended for around ten days, while the other students would be sent back to Cross Field immediately.

"Please be careful. We will protect Cross Field too so....."

"Surely it will be fine right? Syvalles is also all present here, but the Seven Dragon Paladins seems to have gone home already though—"

The expressions of the students recovered their vitality after hearing Lisha's speech.

The people of the royal capital would be told that the extension of Syvalles's stay was because of a change of plan for military exercise. That was the pretext.

After telling everyone to breakup for the time being, Lisha walked toward Lux.

"Lux..... Can you gather all Syvalles member and come to the castle after this? There is an important talk."

"Yes. I understand."

Her confident attitude just now completely changed. Lisha was showing an anxious expression.

An hour later, Lux and others headed to the castle riding horse carriage.

They reunited with Lisha who was returning to the castle earlier than them in the castle's war council room.

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## Part 2

"And, what is the full story? The talk before this wasn't everything, isn't that right?"

The elite members of Syvalles with the addition of Relie were sitting around the table. Right after that Krulcifer was the first one to open her mouth and asked Lisha.

"Yeah..... Honestly speaking, I'm also troubled."

Lisha muttered that without hiding her weak-hearted expression.

"So far, we have investigated as much as possible, but there isn't any information about Azure Division at all. If I'm forced to say, they are like a mafia that originated from Marcafal Kingdom but——....."

She cut off her words, and then she averted her gaze from everyone in hesitation to speak.

"The problem is the ringleader. I don't want to believe it at all but, if it's actually true then this will become something outrageous. It's the reason I couldn't say it at that place when the other students were there."

"Do you know the name of the mastermind?"

Lisha nodded slightly at Celis's question. Before long she resolved herself and opened her mouth.

"The boss of Azure Division, is Almatea Atismata. My little sister who should be separated from us by death five years ago."

"——!?"

Because Lisha herself never told anyone about that existence and name to anyone other than Lux, this was the first time everyone in this place heard about it.



After that, Lisha gave a simple explanation about the whole story.

The threatening letter that Lisha's little sister Almatea sent had this written in it.

The girl knew about the truth regarding the founding of the New Kingdom five years ago. She had grasped the fact of the betrayal of Queen Raffi at that time betraying the great man Count Atismata.

In addition she accused the queen of scheming in the attempt of monopolizing Avalon. She introduced herself as the only legitimate successor of the New Kingdom.

Naturally, the content of the letter and the existence of Azure Division weren't told to the people of the New Kingdom.

At present even the senior statesmen were at their wits' end thinking of how to treat the girl.

"It's another troublesome problem..... Even so, I wonder why she comes forward at this kind of timing..... I don't get it at all."

Tillfur joined her hands behind her neck and grumbled.

"It's because it's this kind of timing isn't it? Rather I can understand if it's like that."

Airi spoke her opinion at the side with a subdued tone.

"Yes. The troublesome powerful enemy that is the Lord has vanished, and the movement of Sacred Eclipse has also been halted. What's left is only to distribute the ancient technology and legacy from Avalon to each country. And then all the countries without exception have their army decreased. Everyone is exhausted to the degree that it's impossible to make any large scale military action. They're taking advantage of that opening and acted to take over Avalon along with the New Kingdom. Perhaps the enemy's aim is something like that."

" ....."

Lux knew that in reality Sacred Eclipse was still active and it was possessing Raffi, but he didn't say anything in this place.

It was because the event of the three days parade that got repeated multiple times by the world revision of the transforming Drag-Ride Uroboros of Fugil—Raffi's secret maneuver wasn't known by the other girls, and Lux also had his own motive.

"That's-not-it-at-all. Even though we finally finished the long fight where it felt like we would die, why would they then do something like this-, that's what I'm angry about here!"

"Tillfur, restrain yourself. Today you can't read the atmosphere more than usual you know?"

Sharis patted the brown haired head \*pon pon\* in admonishment.

Lux lifted his face to return the flow of the talk that was interrupted.

"And, Lisha-sama. What are we going to do after this?"

"A, about that..... I also tried discussing it with her majesty but, for the time being we will be observing on how the opponent will act it seems."

Azure Division had stolen the important keys for operating Avalon that were Aeryl and a Grand Force.

If they had also sent a threatening letter, than next they would present their demand of what they wanted in exchange of those. That was the prediction of Queen Raffi.

The cooperation of the four great nobles had also been asked. It seemed they wanted to keep Syvalles in reserve until the enemy objective was made clear.

Regarding the investigation, soldier Drag-Knights were already dispatched to search the royal capital and its surrounding.

They wanted Lux and others of Syvalles to move after a strategy had been decided by the war council.

The schedule of the ten days from now would be training at the arena during the day, while at night they would gather and had strategy meeting based on the gathered information every day.

"Ten days.....? Why ten days? I don't know how much battle strength the Azure Division has, but if they are an opponent that can kidnap Aeril and assault the Garden, won't it be better for us to remain here for a while?"

Lisha folded her arms and groaned toward Airi's reasonable question.

"Aa..... Well, I also thought like that but, it seems Haha-ue has some kind of thinking. For the time being we are asked to stay here with ten days as the rough estimate."

"....."

There was nothing more that could be said if they were told like that.

After all it seemed that even the New Kingdom's soldiers hadn't even finished investigating the Garden and collecting information.

"Also, I too have something personal to say here, is it alright?"

There Lux talked about a certain circumstance. Everyone was worried about his health and he was urged to leave the meeting early.

Right after that, Lisha straightened her back as though she had been waiting for it and took a deep breath.

"Ah, also—. I have one more important topic. Haha-ue suggested it, about a trial that we should challenge."

The sentence that was told with a bit of tension filling it caused the experienced Syvalles members to hold their breath.

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## Part 3

".....Fuu"

A few hours after the meeting in the castle was over.

Lux retired to the reserved inn and took a bath before passing the time in the guest room of his shared room with Airi while wearing his sleep-wear.

The members of Syvalles frequently came to this room to play, but as expected no one came today.

It was also to prepare for the situation where it was unknown where they would have to move out for a battle against Azure Division. And another reason must be because everyone was being considerate about Lux's condition that was told to them before this.

"For some reason it feels out of place instead for the room to be this quiet. Thinking really carefully, it's also amazing how I'm feeling like that just from seeing there is no girl around Nii-san."

"No, well....."

Lux could only smile wryly toward the meaningful stare from Airi.

Before he would be able to say that it was because the girls were his comrades in Syvalles.....but, Lux couldn't laugh now that he had learned the girls' feeling from repeating the three days of parade multiple times.

The girls were really harboring feeling toward Lux.

And then unfortunately, he wouldn't be able to respond to their feelings.....

"Hey..... Airi, about the New Kingdom and the Academy, this place where we belongs— you.....like it, aren't you?"

Hearing Lux's question, Airi who was sleeping on the next bed quietly turned her face toward him.

"Now see here..... We were criminals you know? When I first came to Cross Field, although I wasn't receiving any harassment openly, it was like a bed of nails for me."

After all in the New Kingdom, Lux and Airi's appearance was characteristic. From a glance anyone would understand that they were from the imperial family.

"I didn't want to worry Nii-san though, so I stayed quiet. At the beginning everyone was avoiding me openly. They treated me like I was a tumor, well, the imperial family was villain after all. But, there wasn't any bullying or the like. Thanks to the Triad."

"The Triad was??"

This was his first time hearing about this even though they had been together for this long.

Come to think of it, he also had never heard about the beginning of Airi and Noct's friendship.

He only knew that they got acquainted as roommate in the dormitory but—.

"Relie-san talked to the Triad who was already famous since that time. She wanted them to become my friend and protect me so that I can be accepted in the Academy. The Triad readily accepted that request. Noct and others asked me to not tell Nii-san about this, and I also didn't have any intention to say it but, I said it. This is a secret okay."

"....."

Airi's expression seemed like she was having fun while saying that.

Even Lux understood the intention of the Triad who expressly asked Airi to not tell him about this.



Surely they didn't want Lux to feel needlessly indebted or fussing about it.

"But, both I and Nii-san don't know when we will die. So I'll raise their evaluation too beforehand."

"I see, so Airi right now also love the people of this country."

"\_\_\_\_\_"

When he pointed that out, Airi glared at him with a blushing face.

She then puffed out her cheeks and looked aside. But before long she muttered with a small voice.

"Please sleep quickly Nii-san. You cannot make anyone more worried than this."

".....Right. Good night, Airi."

They only exchanged those words, then Lux closed his eyes.

After a while, a small sleeper's breathing came from the side and time was passing on.

Surely that conversation of this night wasn't noticed by anyone.

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## Part 4

"Good morning Lux. How are you feeling?"

The next morning, the room's door was knocked at the same time when Lux woke up.

When Lux opened the door with sleepy eyes, Celis was standing there.

"Ah, good morning Celis-senpa —, eeeh!?"

He spontaneously stiffened when he opened the door.

Setting aside how Celis was visiting Lux alone, he couldn't hide his surprise at her appearance.

Unbelievably, she was dressed as maid.

It was an orthodox maid uniform with black base color and pure white maid headdress, but because of her sensual chest and waist, it made him felt an air of immorality instead from it.

"I, I'm sorry! A, as I thought, for me to wear this kind of clothes, this appearance doesn't suit me isn't it?"

The girl who was usually giving a dignified air was unusually blushing bright red with her gaze averted to the corner.

How should he say it, at first he was surprised but, Lux thought that this appearance was nice.

"N, no. It's lovely. But, why is Celis-senpai dressed like——"

"Did the Triad prank you again Celis-senpai? Even though we're in this kind of situation, how can they....."

The instant Airi who was in the same room saw her appearance, she pressed her forehead and sighed.

It seemed she had an idea of the particulars of how this situation came to be and she felt extremely exasperated about it.

"Well, don't say that. Just in case she is wearing a pilot suit under it, and she is also carrying her Sword Device. The security for Lux is flawless."

Seeing the smiling face of Sharis who popped up from behind Celis, Lux also somehow guessed what happened.

"And so, I and Celis will be in charge of looking after Lux-kun this whole day. Best regards Lux-kun."

"Eh, ah, yes....."

Lux could only nodded even while he was feeling bewildered.

Yesterday, during the meeting in the castle. Lux told everyone that in these ten days Lux would devote himself to rest without doing any fighting.

It was in order to allow Lux to fight alone without any students of the Academy noticing it.

Lux intentionally made a fake announcement that the fatigue from the rigorous battles was piling up and he became unable to wear Drag-Ride.

The beginning of this strategy dated back to the late night of the day before yesterday.

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## Part 5

The hideout in the royal capital Lordgalia that was owned by Magialca.

It was a building that looked like an abandoned noble's villa in a glance. Lux and others were talking at its basement.

There were three people inside the dimly lighted parlor.

The boss of Kilzrake Family that was a mafia in Marcafal Kingdom and the captain of Seven Dragon Paladins, Magialca Zen Vanfrick.

She was a person who noticed the world's revision loop that was caused by the transforming Drag-Ride Uroboros, and offered a cooperation to Lux to fight it together.

She was heavily wounded from the previous war and became unable to fight as Drag-Knight anymore, but she was giving support to Lux with the organizational capability she possessed.

Aeril vi Arcadia was a blood relative of the Lord. She was a girl who connected with the center of Avalon at the surface.

In reality it was Raffi who was possessed by Sacred Eclipse who was in possession of the right to control Avalon, but due to the world revision, no one knew about it except of the people here.

At present the leaders and senior statesmen of every country were thinking that the right was owned by Aeril.

And then—Alma Kilzrake.

She was the biological younger sister of Lisha and thought to be dead. She was the second daughter of New Kingdom's great man Count Atismata.

Five years ago.

Due to the information that was leaked by Queen Raffi at that time to Waybra who was a spy of the Old Empire, Alma's hideout was attacked by Old Empire's army. Alma who went through that wretched experience found her way to Marcafal Kingdom where she was picked up by Kilzrake Family. She lived under their roof as a Drag-Knight.

Because of her firm will and proud personality, she hated Lisha and Raffi who betrayed Count Atismata and joined the Old Empire and held a belief toward the Black Hero.

From Queen Raffi's perspective Alma was an extremely troublesome existence. Her status could possibly become a powerful trump card against the New Kingdom.

Lux, Aeryl, and Magialca and Alma's Kilzrake Family.

The Azure Division was an organization that was made up from the alliance of these four.

Destroying Sacred Eclipse that assimilated with Queen Raffi and liberating the new kingdom from the control of Fugil and Arshalia.

In order to accomplish that objective, they were going to commence the last battle.

"Tonight will be the last time we have a talk here. From here on Alma or Aeryl will receive Lux's instruction, and from them I will be the relay that convey the instruction to the whole Azure Division."

"I think that will be fine. Although Queen Raffi won't be able to make any big movement from now on, it will be too conspicuous for Lux-kun to walk around even using that method."

Aeryl also nodded at Magialca's comment.

The Grand Force of Garden was pulled out and the function of Avalon was drastically weakened.



Because the energy would be insufficient to move the eight Automatons like before, it should be difficult to continue monitoring Lux constantly.

Currently Lux was asking Yoruka to search the surrounding using Yato no Kami's detection ability to confirm that there was no reaction before he was acting, but considering the possibility that the monitoring on Lux could be strengthened after this, it would be too dangerous for all of them to gather like this.

Therefore, it was decided that Lux would become the actual leader of Azure Division from now with Alma or Aeril challenging the new kingdom as his subordinates.

"Right. After this I'll think of the strategy for the next ten days, so can I borrow the [Coffin] right away?"

The Coffin was an appliance for human to enter. It was an equipment made by ancient technology to apply Baptism and strengthened the body.

The other day, they collected it during their attack at the Garden, but Alma had used it earlier to strengthen her mental strength.

Lux also intended to use it to strengthen a part of his physical ability as special trait.

"Alright. But, if you are going to use it, it will be just for a bit. The amount of Elixir that has been administered to Lux-kun should be really near the limit already after all....."

Aeril stared at Lux worriedly.

Body strengthening by blending Elixir into the body—Baptism, it wasn't something that could be done as many times as one liked.

The user wouldn't just receive considerable pain, they would also die if the dose was over the permissible level.

Thus, using the remaining few capacity.

Like how Yoruka strengthened her left eye to turn it into magic eye that read the opponent's presence, Lux too could only specially strengthened his body and mind in preparation for the battle against Fugil.

"But, that will be a big gamble you know? You will be suffering from the side effect for several days, and it will be hard for you to even move properly. In the first place it's also unthinkable that you will be able to win against that Fugil even if you do that."(Magialca)

"....."

Fugil's strength that could only be defeated after gathering six of the strongest Drag-Knight of each country—the Seven Dragon Paladins.

The capability of the transforming Drag-Ride Uroboros was in a different dimension.

In addition Raffi too would surely dispatch the strengthened Automatas at the critical moment.

Even if Lux succeeded in strengthening himself with Baptism, there was a boundless gap of battle strength there.

But,

"I'll do it. There are still many more big gambles that will be necessary in order to defeat Fugil. Even so, I have to do it——"

".....Looks like you have resolved yourself. Aeryl, activate the Coffin at the next room."

"I understand. Come, Lux-kun. Take off your clothes and come over here."

"Eeh.....!?"

"What, are you embarrassed? You had peeped at us in the bath before this, so this is payback."

Lux flinched when Aeryl told him that with a smile as though it was only natural. He then used the Coffin.

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After that—, Lux safely went through the Baptism and returned to the inn after finishing the planning session.

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## Part 6

And then right now in the guest room of the reserved inn where Lux was at.

Of course that event of two days ago wasn't told to anyone. He simply said that he couldn't use Drag-Ride because of his accumulated fatigue. But it was unexpected that Celis would visit him who was resting.

No, he had considered about someone coming to visit him, but as expected he was surprised at the idea of them sticking close to him and nursing him for almost the whole day.

Furthermore when it was Celis wearing maid uniform who would do such thing.....

"That's, is it a bother for you? Even though you're unwell"

"N, no! There is no such thing. I'm happy that Celis-senpai come."

".....-!"

Celis who saw Lux's smile instantly blushed. Then her expression brightened in a flash.

"Thank you very much. I'll do my best."

Beside him Airi was showing a really conflicted glare, but before long she headed toward the room's door along with Noct.

"Airi, where're you going?"

"I think I'll be in the way of you two. Besides there are various things that I want to investigate while Nii-san is resting."

She only said that and left the room with Noct.

Lux felt a discomfort for a moment, but he couldn't express it in words well.

Like that, a day of Celis nursing him began.

## **Chapter 2 – Queen and Princess**

## Part 1

"NUAAaA.....! I'm frustrated here!"

The first day of the ten days in preparation to face the Azure Division.

Lisha and Krulcifer were training in the capital's arena under the sunny blue sky.

They were both wearing pilot suit and Drag-Ride, but there were only security soldiers here and there around them. There was no one else.

The training was also a light one and not with their full power in order to not exhaust their stamina.

Even that was ended early after ten-odd minutes before Lisha would return to the castle.

"It can't be helped. After all, the one who is nursing Lux-kun was decided by lottery."

"Not that! No, that one is also in my mind but..... that's not it. I'm angry at the bunch who came in this kind of situation. They are getting in the way of our confession time!"

"That's a coarse reasoning but, I also agree with your point. Thanks to them there is a need to extend the pact's period again."

Krulcifer also leaked out a sigh.

There was no way they could do the confession to Lux in this emergency situation, so it ended up being postponed in emergency.

And then it was decided by lottery who would be nursing Lux—it was fine until this point but, there was one concerning matter.

"More importantly, is it alright to not mention that matter to Lux-kun? I think that it's a problem that has to do with things from here on though?"

"That's....."

Lisha faltered towards Krulcifer's question and thought.

She was thinking about whether she should secretly tell Lux about the suggestion from her stepmother Queen Raffi behind the scenes, but—

"No, it's alright. Let's not tell Lux. He will act recklessly if we tell him anyway."

Lisha's face looked somewhat lonely when saying that.

"Thinking back, everyone is relying on Lux too much. That guy is strong and can do anything, so that guy too is fighting to answer the expectations. This time we have to step up to the challenge."

"Yes, you're right. That's an unusually logical opinion coming from you."

Krulcifer also agreed after hesitating a bit.

"What're you saying? I'm always saying the proper thing."

"Yes yes. Let's just leave it at that."

It was a casual reply like usual, but Lisha noticed that there was a hidden meaning somewhere in Krulcifer's gaze towards her.

Her gaze asked whether the suggestion from Queen Raffi the other day really didn't have any other meaning.

(There is nothing strange at all. Haha-ue's suggestion shouldn't be mistaken at all.)

Lisha believed in Raffi who had confessed her past to her and deepened their bond.

She had to put herself on the line in order to protect the New Kingdom, for the sake of her stepmother, and also for Lux's sake.



She renewed that feeling within her heart and threw herself into the training in the arena.

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## Part 2

"Say..... Celis-senpai. It's alright even if you don't stare so intensely at me like that you know?"

"Tha, that's true. But, if I don't properly watch over Lux, it feels like I won't be able to accomplish my duty."

On the other hand, at the inn around that time.

Celis who was entrusted with nursing Lux was standing near the room's door while still dressed in maid uniform. She was staring still at Lux.

Normally she had a dignified and aloof attitude, but when she was like this she looked like a dog that was given the 'wait' command.

Simply her presence itself was making Lux anxious, but there was also another matter that was a troublesome problem for Lux.

Currently Lux was the actual leader of the Azure Division.

Thus, he had to give instructions to Magialca, Aeryl, and Alma. In order to do that he had to write letters and thoughts about the strategy.

His collaborators would be looking for a chance to contact him, or he would give the signal if it was possible for him to give some direction, but doing that would be difficult in this situation.

Therefore, Lux was plainly troubled.

"There is no need to worry. After all I cannot really move just as you can see."

Lux waved both his hands while smiling wryly. He showed that he was nervous from being stared like that.

He thought that even Celis would surely understood that, but contrary to his expectations she turned a serious expression towards him.

"Perhaps it might be a needless consideration but.....her majesty the queen also directly requested us. She wanted us to not take our eyes off of Lux during these ten days as much as possible."

"—Eh?"

Lux slightly gulped hearing those words.

This constant supervision wasn't a spontaneous action of Lisha and the others, but an instruction from Queen Raffi.

The other day, the queen also tried to threaten him when his criminal collar was taken off, but perhaps the suspicion of him being related to the Azure Division still hadn't been cleared.

(Her majesty's wariness is still not cleared. I guess it's only natural. Even though there is no proof, looking at the circumstances the possibility is high that I'm involved with the Azure Division.)

Powerful Drag-Knights who could attack the Garden and defeat a clone of Sacred Eclipse was limited in number even throughout the world.

And above all else, the other side also learned that he noticed the world revision loop once.

In her position, the queen wouldn't wish to harm Lux who was currently a hero of the New Kingdom, even so she was regarding him as dangerous.

Furthermore if the people monitoring him were his close comrades, then it would be even more difficult to shake them off.

Lux thought that the monitoring on him would be decreased if he was in a state unable to fight due to the accumulation of damage, but it was a big mistake.

The continuing monitoring on Lux itself was within the expectations, but his options from here on would be limited.

(This is her majesty's tactic..... Or else, was it a suggestion from Fugil?)

Lux thought slightly before judging that the latter wasn't the case.

As far as Lux knew, it would be unthinkable for Fugil himself to give instructions to the ruler for every single thing.

He would only guide someone for them to grow. Although he would show the general path, in the end he would leave the person to decide the fundamental policy by themselves.

Fugil whose mission was to [continue saving the weak]and was acting to fulfill his role of ascertaining the people's choices wouldn't interfere greatly with history by his own will.

In that case this was the queen's decision.

Furthermore it was a calculation from Raffi who was possessed by Sacred Eclipse and was reborn to possess both tremendous ability and self-confidence. There was no doubt about it.

"\_\_\_\_\_"

Lux suddenly recalled the leaders of the organizations that he had fought until now.

In order to take revenge on the humans thriving in this world and to display the majesty of the Lords, Hayes pushed on with strategy that would be in accordance to those.

Dragon Marauder was moving with the rationality of mercenaries in order to obtain royal authority themselves.

Listelka used prudence to a degree that could even be called as cowardly and cool-headedness to a degree that she would even discard her own

siblings Hayes and Aeryl only to single-mindedly aim at obtaining Avalon.

—In that case, what about Queen Raffi?

She didn't let her guard down by indulging in her power from her union with Sacred Eclipse. At the present time there was no opening in her actions, but what was she trying to do?

How would she deal with the aggressor Azure Division?

There would be no chance of victory if he didn't learn the way she thought and saw through her tactics during these ten days.

(.....)

The objective of Lux's side at present was generally three.

First was to pinpoint and discover the location of the hidden Avalon that seemed to have been moved from the abandoned capital, Guernica, to the New Kingdom.

Next was to search for the weakness of Ouroboros and also Sacred Eclipse itself in the library facility that was called the Archive in that Avalon, and then think of the countermeasures for them.

And then their last objective was to defeat Fugil and Sacred Eclipse without being noticed by Lisha and the others, but because Lux attempted to strengthen his body using Baptism, he couldn't move satisfactorily for two or three days.

During that time, his movement to give instruction to Alma and the others and to take the first action against the queen was sealed like this.

(Then, I have no choice but to distract Celis-senpai somehow.)

It was within expectations that Lux himself would be monitored, that was why several methods had already been prepared in order to make contact with Alma and the others.

But, only the situation of being under constant supervision was bad, so it would be necessary to lightly lure Celis away.

"I'm sorry. Can senpai leave me alone for a bit? There is something that I want to think about."

"Tha, that's..... Is it no good if I'm here? That, I think I can at least give you advice."

When Lux said that, Celis naturally persisted to stay, but Lux also had a plan.

What kind of instructions had Celis and the others received from Queen Raffi?

He planned to get the information about Queen Raffi's proposition and aim from conversation without directly asking.

"No, of course that's not the case. But can I ask senpai to leave me for a bit? I absolutely won't leave the room."

".....However, that's——"

Celis fidgeted while entwining her fingers with a troubled face.

Perhaps because he was normally seeing her dignified figure, when she was behaving like a girl like this, she looked really lovely in addition because of the gap.

"Wait a second Celis. Your diligence is something widely known but, even Lux-kun will have it hard if he is constantly stared at you know?"

Sharis of the Triad who was outside the room seemed to hear their conversation and entered inside.

Just from this Lux understood that he was monitored by at least two people.

(As I thought it's strange. Most likely they are ordered with the pretext of protecting me. But the reason is weak with only that.)

Although there was also Lux's own complicated position to consider, there would be meaning to guard him this strictly.

Raffi should be telling them a clear reason why Lux mustn't go outside or why they mustn't take their eyes off him.

Perhaps there was also Automata present. They might be in disguise or secretly lurking and watching from afar.

But, with a Grand Force taken away from the Garden, right now the world revision couldn't be carried out.

That meant even the presence of the Automata would be noticed by people. It would attract attention if they acted too strangely.

That must be why Queen Raffi was making use of everyone of Syvalles but—

"However Sharis, you also know right? You know, that....."

Celis spoke ambiguously.

It was obvious that she couldn't lie well and hesitated to speak exactly because she was an upright and cleanhanded girl.

(This is, it's something necessary in order to grasp the truth and take back the New Kingdom but—. Somehow this is unpleasant, doing something like this.)

Analyzing the personality and thought of the girls who were trusting him and reading the underneath.

Five years ago he resolved himself to destroy the Old Empire, but Lux right now didn't want to look to these girls with that kind of eye.

Surely that was the proof that they were also important comrades for Lux.

(But, exactly because of that—I can't drag them into this battle.)

It would be enough for him alone to take the blame if this failed.

When he was thinking that and renewing his resolve once more,

"Celis. Boys at that age have all sorts of circumstances. Even Lux-kun will have times where he wants to be alone."

(Eh.....?)

The conversation of Sharis and Celis that was going on right outside the room caused Lux to tilt his head in puzzlement.

"Is, is that so?"

"Yep yep, and about what he is going to do specifically, mumble mumble..... In the past, when I went out with everyone of the Triad we also got interested with that kind of book."

".....Wait-!?"

Lux noticed that they were having a questionable misunderstanding and his face twitched.

"It's like that, that's why isn't it fine even if you push him down now? Luckily Airi-chan is also not here, he might fall easily you know?"

(Err, your voice is audible until here though.....)

They were making an outrageous misunderstanding about him, but as a result they might let him to be alone, so would it be better to not correct them?

Lux was observing the exchange of the two senior girls with a conflicted feeling.



"That is, that, it's imprudent! At this kind of time——"

Celis somehow imagined Sharis's suggestion and rejected it.

Well, he felt like it was already problematic by the time they were nursing him in maid uniform but, at the very least it seemed she had no intention to cross a line with Lux during these ten days.

Before long the talk seemed to be concluded. Celis in her maid uniform peeked in.

"I, I understand. I will check inside sometimes but, I'll leave the room for a bit. If something happens I will immediately come running, so please call me."

"Ah, yes....."

Celis said only that and walked to leave the room——her feet stopped walking in the middle and she turned around.

"A, also.....one more thing. If there is something, that you want to do..... I, if it's not something too indecent then I'll help out so, please tell me!"

Celis said that with a bright red face and bowed with a bob of her head before exiting.

Lux stiffened for a while before he let out a sigh.

"Sharis-san must be the one making her say that....."

It was a guess that was most likely right but, even so it was the nature of men to feel his heart throbbing when being told that for real.

It would be wonderful if he could really enjoy a daily life with them peacefully without anything happening.

(I'm sorry, Celis-senpai. Everyone——)

Lux who was finally liberated from the supervision pretended to lightly stretched his body and checked the surrounding of the inn from the window.

And then, he changed the position of the cup beside his pillow. A few minutes later.

The curtain in front of him soundlessly swayed and a girl in uniform appeared.

The strongest assassin from Koto who was feared as the Empire's Assassin Blade—Kirihome Yoruka.

The members of Syvalles received summons from the New Kingdom, but she was an exception.

In the first place, Yoruka herself received a treatment like a member of Syvalles, but on the surface she wasn't recognized as a Drag-Knight. She was working as Lux's right hand.

At the award ceremony the other day too, Lux suggested for her to attend too, but Yoruka declined by her own will.

Therefore, while she was hiding a strength that was top class even among Lux and the others, she was an unknown existence for the New Kingdom.

It went without saying that her strong point was the capability of her special equipment type Divine Drag-Ride Yato no Kami, but even more than that was her excellence in covert actions.

She was skilled at reading the opponent's presence and erasing her own presence at the same time.

And above all else she wasn't restricted by the system called the New Kingdom. Her allegiance was offered to Lux personally.

Because of that, he had given her detailed instructions to follow his order even before this situation where he became unable to move.

They had decided several signs like changing the cup position just now.

[What is your order for me Aruji-sama? Please ask me for anything.]

She pinched the end of her skirt and reverently bowed her head.

Her eyes had different colors on the left and right.

Her bewitching air that seemed unworldly at a glance caused him to watch in fascination without meaning to.

By the way, speaking words were forbidden so that the lookout outside wouldn't get suspicious.

In exchange they were conversing by reading each other's lips.

In the past he had tested with her once whether it would be possible for her to lip read, but as expected from her who was also doing covert work in her birthplace, she was also able to do that.

After that it depended on Lux, but he somehow mastered it only by looking and remembering Yoruka's lip movement.

In other words, she was his greatest trump card in the battle against the New Kingdom.

In the previous war she was defeated by Singlen and unable to really play an active role due to an accumulation of fatigue and post-recovery symptoms. But right now she was fully recovered so she could fight to her heart's content.

[There are several things I want to ask but, is it alright?]

[There is no need to ask me that. After all this body exists only for Aruji-sama's sake.]

He had a short exchange with Yoruka without making any sound like before.

It seemed like Raffi was limiting Lux's action cautiously, but at this point in time it was a diversion.

Lux predicted that it was a plan to make him more wary than necessary to blunt his momentum. He shook off his hesitation and moved to take action.

Currently Raffi didn't have any piece at hand except the Automatas that she couldn't move in the open and Syvalles.

She also had to split some personnel to search for Aeril and the Grand Force, because of that Avalon would be lightly guarded.

Lux prepared to search for its location and attack within these ten days.

It should be Raffi who was being cornered by the limit of ten days.

The reason of that was, now that the previous world revision ended imperfectly, the more days passed, the more the revision would gradually come apart at the seam.

[Just as Aruji-sama expected, that place was visited by a tragedy. Will you send letter to them?]

'Them' that Yoruka referred to was of course the main members of the Azure Division.

[Yes. First we will investigate the opponent's battle strength, and then I plan to set a diversion. Tell them that it's just as planned.]

Specifically they were Lisha's little sister, Alma Kilzrake.

Aeril vi Arcadia.

Magialca Zen Vanfrick. Those three.

They didn't make any sound and he didn't think that this conversation was being observed, but he was progressing cautiously just in case.

What Lux was trying to do was nothing but a coup d'etat in reality.

From here on all his actions would be risking his life.

[Also, can I ask you for one more thing? It's about Airi—]

After handing the letter that had the strategy written in it and conveying the information, Lux talked to Yoruka.

[If something happens to me, I want you to take her away and escape. Protect Airi as much as you can, but if it's impossible even then, then I want that you survive even if it's only you alone. This is a selfish request but—]

"....."

It was a talk about if Lux was defeated in this battle and dies, or if he was executed as a traitor.

At the very least he wanted to save his only sibling who would get dragged into this.

Of course he didn't take this challenge with the intention of losing, but the enemy was just too powerful.

Even though he didn't want to treat Yoruka like a tool, in the end he imposed a harsh order on her and felt guilt. Even so he could only rely on her in this situation.

[—Yes, I understand and accept.]

Yoruka nodded at Lux's request.

[.....I see. Thank you.]

Lux smiled, but he was unconvinced in his heart.

[Is that unexpected Aruji-sama? That I will obediently follow that order?]

"....."

Bull's eye.

Since Yoruka met and fought Lux, she gave him her loyalty.

But in the end that was only a relationship of her serving Lux alone and no one else.

That kind of girl, in a situation where Lux might die—and given an order for after his death was accepting it readily. Honestly it was unexpected for him.

[Yeah. I thought that Yoruka would surely dislike it.]

[I'm acting with dislike? Why would I?]

The subservient girl made a small smile and looked up to him.

[That's—.....-!?!]

In that instant when he was trying to express his feeling that was hard to describe in words, his lips were blocked.

Warm, smooth, and soft sensation.

The girl's sweet scent was mixed with the scent of blood and steel.

"....."

They were talking with only their lip movement until now without making any sound, but he almost let out a voice from surprise.

"Nn.....fuu"

After their lips overlapped for ten-odd seconds, Yoruka silently let go.

Her cheeks were tinged with faint blushing. Her purple eye that was looking up to him was shining in exaltation.

[Yoruka.....]

Lux was bewildered by the surprise kiss, even so he somehow muttered while holding back his voice.

Then, the girl displayed a carefree bright smile and softly took Lux's hand.

[Aruji-sama, doesn't need to feel any guilt for the likes of me.]

[Did I, make such face?]

[Yes. Very clearly.]

"....."

She answered instantly. Lux became unable to say anything further.

[I am honored. That Aruji-sama is valuing me highly as your trump card. That you are giving me orders that you cannot say to anyone else. This body is throbbing from happiness that I cannot suppress.]

"....."

In other words, the kiss just now seemed to be the expression of Yoruka's own impulse.

If he thought about it, that might be so.

Lux wouldn't be able to entrust Airi who was his only blood-related family to her if he didn't trust her from the bottom of his heart.

Surely an ego that enabled her to feel that feeling of Lux was also sprouting within Yoruka herself.

[I won't let Aruji-sama die. But, if Aruji-sama can feel relieved with me accepting that order, then I happily accept. Well then Aruji-sama—I love you.]

\*Chuu\*

Yoruka lightly kissed Lux's cheek before silently leaving the room.

Lux felt impressed once more at her body movement that didn't make a single sound while entering a dreamy state of mind.

"Yoruka..... I"

The girl didn't remember about the three days loop of the New Years parade—or it should be.

That was why, she also forgot about confessing her love to Lux in the middle of that festival and swearing her love.

Even so, the flame of feeling that was sprouting in her hadn't vanished.

But, Lux alone knew.

About her—about their feelings.

Even Lux couldn't imagine what kind of conclusion would come from this battle against the New Kingdom.

But—if he could make a wish, there was just one thing that he wanted to settle.

(—Celis-senpai, Yoruka, Krulcifer-san, Phi-chan.....)

The feeling that was conveyed to him from everyone in those three days.

He strongly vowed that he couldn't die until he could tell them his gratitude.



## Part 3

Around the time Lux was forming various plans in the inn's room.

Lisha who finished the light training with Krulcifer at the arena returned to her room in the castle.

She was behaving courageously when she was with other people, and she also couldn't show her weakness to Lux who was unable to move from fatigue, but in the inside she was tormented with a terror that was crushing her.

"How.....? Alma is, alive..... and she knows about Haha-ue's secret, and resenting her——"

She leaned deeply into the sofa and hung her head down with a pale expression.

She believed that they had finally obtained peace and she even safely finished her duty as princess in the parade.

And yet, the ghost of five years ago was surfacing again.

Originally she should be happy that her little sister who should have been dead was alive, but Alma introduced herself as an enemy that shook the peace of the New Kingdom. It was worrying her as the princess.

Besides, even if she wanted to stop it, the situation was already moving.

Aeril was kidnapped, and the Grand Force was also taken out from the Garden.

The objective of the Azure Division that Alma was leading was still unknown, but what concerned her was the line that was written in the threatening letter, exposing the sin of the New Kingdom—that description.

At a glance it was incomprehensible words for other people but, Lisha had an idea regarding that.

If she had to say the personality of her little sister Alma was similar to their father.

She treasured her pride as a feudal lord's daughter and respected her father who was trying to remonstrate the Old Empire that was carrying out misgovernment at that time.

Lisha as a person was also agreeing with her father's policy, but when she was taken as a hostage and learned that she was abandoned for the sake of the greater cause, she was unable to commit suicide and ran away.

She betrayed her father and sided with the Old Empire. She resolved herself to live as an assassin.

Alma idolized her in the past, but if she knew that Lisha betrayed their father, it would be only natural for her to hold a grudge.

Because, surely, if it was her, even if she was captured she would choose a honorable death.

"This is no good..... Even though I had sworn to not rely on Lux for a while just now."

Lisha believed that she had obtained self-confidence after overcoming all the battles until now.

She believed that she had recognized her weakness and conquered it in her own way.

But when she was facing a completely unexpected danger like this, she keenly felt her own weakness helplessly.

(Lux..... If it's you, what would you do at this kind of time?)

The problem of the New Kingdom.

The problem of the kidnapped Aeril.

And then the appearance of her destiny with her little sister Alma. When she was at her wits' end of what to do,

"Lisha. Can I come in?"

"Ha, Haha-ue.....? Please, come in."

\*Knock knock\*, after the small knocking sound, a gentle and graceful voice came from outside.

The one who entered the room was Queen Raffi wearing a dress.

She should look the same like usual but—

(What in the world..... This feeling is—)

Since the day after the parade, she had this murky feeling, and sometimes Raffi's figure would look blurry to her.

It wasn't her eyesight that was declining, but Raffi's existence itself that for some reason looked like a different thing. She was harboring such misapprehensions.

A silhouette that was different from the current Raffi, one that looked like a young girl the same age as Lisha glimmered into her view.

(.....Am I tired? I have to limit myself even in running from reality.)

Raffi sat down beside Lisha who was smiling in self-depreciation.

Anyone would be shaken in this situation, however her stepmother was unwavering.

"It looks like Alma is alive. From the story of the Drag-Knights protecting the checkpoint of Garden, they didn't actually see her face but—either way it's not something that can be judged from appearance."

"It will be great if it's just completely fake but..... If she is the real one then——"

"Unfortunately if she can't be persuaded, then there will be no choice but to kill her."

"No way.....!"

Lisha spontaneously raised her face at the words of Raffi who was quietly looking down.

But, her stepmother the queen kept a smile on her face and gently took Lisha's hand before whispering to her.

"Of course. For me she is your little sister and my niece. I don't want to kill her. But, no matter who she is we can't leave alone someone who is disturbing the peace that we finally obtained. The duty of the royal family doesn't consist of only clean work."

"That, is....."

Lisha also understood that logically.

——No, she intended to understand it.

If Alma came here as an enemy of the New Kingdom with a great cause of her own, exactly because they were sisters that she couldn't overlook her.

Power struggles due to blood relationships was a norm for a ruler.

But, even while knowing that laying hands on blood relatives who shared the same blood was something extremely painful.

(Did Lux, try to change the Old Empire even if he had to make this kind of resolve.....)

She flinched when she thought about the resolve of the young man who was her knight.

"You can't do it? Then, please leave it to me. I will work to deal with this without dirtying your hand."

When Raffi said that with a kind expression, a heat bloomed inside Lisha.

That was something that came from the pride that was buried inside Lisha's own heart.

".....No! Please wait! I will do it!"

"Is that fine?"

Lisha nodded without hesitation at Raffi's question.

"I was naïve. I have to be the one who settles this destiny with Alma. If my knight was in this kind of position, then he surely wouldn't run away and face it head on."

"You mean Lux don't you? You really like him."

Lisha's cheeks blushed red when her stepmother pointed that out.

"Yes..... That guy—no, he doesn't notice at all though."

Lisha said while nodding and puffed up her cheeks in dissatisfaction.

Raffi who saw that also chuckled in amusement.

"There is no such thing. I think that surely he also likes you."

"Is, that so?"

"Yes..... There is no way he won't have feelings towards a girl so laudable and persevering like you."

Her words sounded like a mere consolation, but for some reason Lisha was relieved just from being told that.

For a brief moment the room was filled with a gentle atmosphere—

"-.....!?"

"What's the matter, Lisha?"

"N, no. It's, nothing."

Suddenly she felt like there was a thick stench of death emitted from Raffi beside her.

But, it seemed to be just a hallucination.

(What, was that presence just now.....? It's like Haha-ue, isn't human anymore——)

Her whole body shuddered in terror as though her instinct as a living thing was stinging.

Lisha knew that sensation from her battles until now.

It was as though, an Abyss.....no, a Ragnarok's——

"Your majesty, so you are here!?"

Suddenly a soldier's voice came from outside the room. Lisha returned to her senses in surprise.

"Please come in, what is it?"

When the queen replied gently, a soldier who was still young rushed inside in panic.

"The people of the Azure Division appeared at the district of the rich in the capital! They are demanding to negotiate with your majesty or with Lisha-sama! They also brought the Grand Force."

"——! So they made their move!"

They came in challenge quickly after making the war proclamation.

The enemy's objective was unclear, but from how they were mentioning Queen Raffi and Lisha's name, their aim must be the two of them.

"I will go out. Your majesty, please ask for support from the military so that the citizens won't be dragged into this."

"I'll leave it to you, Lisha. Ah, also—including you who have gone through the aforementioned thing, the strengthening of those girls will take a bit more time. Especially that girl because her body is a bit complicated."

Raffi spoke with a tone that was filled with implication. Lisha nodded.

Celis was guarding Lux, and Philuffy was in the middle of rest. Excluding them, right now Lisha and Krulcifer were the only Syvalles who could move.

She had to be at the front in order to ascertain the opponent's strength too.

"—Awaken, ancestor of the beginnings. O monarch dragon of gods who is worth an army on your own. Tiamat!"

She jumped out of the room and fell down the parapet. Then she pull out her Sword Device and summoned the Divine Drag-Ride Tiamat.

After countless armor pieces were fitted onto her body, she flew towards the scene without any hesitation.

"Your majesty. What should we do? Also—we cannot find Prime Minister Nulph anywhere."

"Can you dispatch the Drag-Knights to back up Lisha? Regarding Prime Minister Nulph, I will talk about it later. I have an idea where he is so—"

".....Yes!"

The soldier who came as a messenger bowed to Raffi and immediately left.

Two people appeared behind the queen who was seeing him off.

"It looks like the Azure Division bunch is moving. Did you make the wrong prediction?"

The one who asked with monotone voice was the Automata that managed Avalon, Arshalia.

She possessed pure white hair and grey eyes and wore a pilot suit.

Then standing beside her was Fugil wearing a black overcoat.

"It seems a trial has arrived quickly. If you have any order than please allow me to hear it."

The silver haired man bowed courteously to serve.

"Fufu, how reliable."

Raffi smiled while turning towards Fugil.

"I indirectly sent ordinary soldiers to stand watch but, it seems Lux has done nothing but resting in the inn's room. There is no suspicious movement at all."

"So you are saying, that my foolish little brother is unrelated with the case of the Azure Division?"

"No, I don't think so. If it's Lux, he surely can do something like tricking the eyes of the soldiers and give orders to the Azure Division using some kind of method. That's if he is connected with them though."

"Hou.....so you have confidence in it? When you personally took off his criminal collar—you tested my foolish little brother whether he noticed your true identity or not didn't you?"

The parade the other day.



At the last day when the activation of the world revision by Ouroboros ended incompletely, Queen Raffi made Lux aware of her union with Sacred Eclipse, but he didn't react.

Therefore, the suspicion to Lux originally should have been cleared, but,

"It's because I know of Lux's true identity—. It's thanks to you."

Raffi made a smile that was mixed with cynicism and replied so to Fugil.

Five years ago, the Old Empire was destroyed due to the Black Hero—or more accurately due to Fugil's plan.

Lux's memory regarding world revision was erased due to Ouroboros, but after that the New Kingdom administration was born, then Lux and Airi were given amnesty. From that sequence of events, Raffi learned that it was none other than Lux who was the mastermind that planned the revolution with Fugil's guidance.

Although he received various help with that, the fact that a boy at the tender age of twelve was guiding the destruction of the Old Empire caused her to harbor vigilance towards him.

If it was someone who had accomplished such a great undertaking, then something like tricking Raffi and turning the New Kingdom into an enemy would be something that he could easily pull off.

And then, until now she had continuously watched him defeat powerful enemies possessing bottomless strength many times.

She was the one who assessed Lux highly more than anyone in this world. She recognized him as an opponent she couldn't let her guard down against.

She believed that now that she was in the position as his enemy.

"—I'm looking forward to it."

There was a smile on the lips of Raffi who was muttering that.

"The true value of Lisha and I, of the New Kingdom is being tested. How will he break through this situation, I have to learn from him."

"Then, should I send several of my sisters?"

Raffi nodded at Arshalia's counsel.

The sisters here referred to the seven Automatons other than Arshalia.

The girls who were the Gear Leaders of the Ruins gathered as the hands and feet of Raffi in order to protect Avalon. Their performance was strengthened to be Drag-Knights.

"Please choose the suitable person to keep watch. But, well, just one person is enough. We also can't make any waste after all."

Because they had done world revision several times and with a Grand Force also stolen, the power to move the Automata was also lowered.

With the idea of controlling the automatons, the [Eight Instrumentalists] as trump card, she couldn't move them in the open right now.

"Right now just one will be enough. First we have to prevent the enemy from discovering the location of Avalon. Besides, if we don't also repress my impulse——"

Raffi was wearing a dress that fitted her appearance that had gone back to her youth. Her lips twisted into a wide arc.

The sign already came out in the middle of her talk with Lisha just now.

The body that fused with Sacred Eclipse and took in the abilities of the seven Ragnarok could destroy even the world. It possessed an absolutely undefeated capability.

But, the stronger the power was, the bigger the consumption would be.

Thus, she had to go in order for a refill.

At any rate it was insufficient with just the low quality fodder the other day.

"Then, please take care of the castle, Fugil, Arshalia."

"Yes. Please head out without any worry."

Arshalia bowed. Then Raffi headed to the terrace that was jutting out from the castle.

Several seconds later, Raffi's figure vanished like smoke.

## Part 4

"Uu, I'm nervous..... According to Lu....., that person, not all of Syvalles members will come out but——"

Two Drag-Knights clad in the strengthened type general purpose Drag-Ride, EX Wyvern were talking while flying in the sky of the capital.

One was a blond haired girl, Alma Kilzrake.

She was the second daughter of the great man Count Atismata, and the candidate to be the next leader of Magialca's Kilzrake family.

After learning that Lux was the Black Hero who she respected and entered under his command, she was acting as the leader of the Azure Division on the surface.

"Geez, don't carelessly let your tongue slip like that, Alma. After all our life is at stake here."

The one who chided Alma's slip of the tongue from the side was a girl who was one of the Lords wearing a full face mask, Aeryl vi Arcadia.

Aeryl was rescued from the Garden in order to oppose Raffi who was possessed by Sacred Eclipse and schemed to rule using world revision. She agreed to fight the New Kingdom together with Lux.

Since then it was decided that she would move under Lux's instructions. She was hiding in the hideout while taking on the role as Alma's assistant.

The number of Drag-Knights in the Kilzrake family numbered considerably, but fundamentally there was no plan to make them participate in the battle.

After all the New Kingdom's——Syvalles's top class Drag-Knights were phenomenally more powerful than them.

Whether they tried surprise attacks or used numbers, most likely they wouldn't even be able to buy time if they clashed with Syvalles—

Because that was what Magialca said, Alma too could only obey.

In reality Alma had also seen Lux's true capability at Garden before, so she could also accept it.

"Also, you understand don't you? Even if you meet with Princess Lisha, you mustn't get too heated up okay? Remember that our mission this time——"

"Diversion and buying time right? I know."

Alma cut off Aeryl's words a bit too snappily.

In Lux's camp and Raffi's camp, each had their own design towards the opponent.

For Raffi, she wanted to take back the Grand Force before ten days passed and the binding of the world revision was dispelled.

The reason was because the previous world revision ended incompletely. From here on, as time passed, the change in Raffi's appearance and the sin she committed in the previous loops would be brought to light.

Therefore, if Alma and the others exposed themselves, she would bite in order to take back the Grand Force.

She would surely become desperate to obtain it.

Furthermore because the Automatons were standing out and also using up the Ruin's energy, they shouldn't be usable for something too big.

"This is my first work from that person's request. I'll accomplish it without fail."

"Right. I'll act just as planned, so do your best for the rest."

Alma muttered with a serious expression. Aeril also nodded back.

The district for the wealthy where many nobles related to the Old Empire faction were living at.

Alma who arrived at its main street used the megaphone function of the Drag-Ride and raised her voice.

It was still noon, so the figures of people of all ages and gender could be seen.

"—People of the New Kingdom. Listen to me! My name is Alma Atismata! The second daughter of the great hero Count Atismata! I've come to this place in order to expose the evil of Queen Raffi and the New Kingdom!"

\*Murmur murmur\*. The appearance of the unfamiliar Drag-Knight caused a commotion.

.

"What's with that?"

"Alma Atismata..... Is she a daughter of the great hero Count Atismata?"

"But, she said something about exposing her majesty queen Raffi's evil."

.

The people were shaking from the clearly disquieting atmosphere while watching over from afar at the girl who appeared.

There were also people like women bringing children who hid inside houses or buildings.

"The queen's sin—. There is also how she displayed her incompetence at the decisive battle against the Lords in the struggle for the Ruins, but her greatest sin is the slaughter of the people who she ought to protect."

Alma unsheathed her Sword Device and pointed at a section of the land.

"You gentlemen and ladies who are living in this area already know it don't you? Of the case of mass disappearances of the senior consuls who are said to belong to the Old Empire faction! Queen Raffi is the perpetrator. The mansion they used as a gathering spot was burned down, and even the guards became sacrifices. And then——"

The moment Alma raised her voice to continue her speech, the sound of cutting through wind struck the eardrum.

".....-!"

Instantly Aeryl who was wearing an EX Wyvern raised up her medium sized Blade.

Four flying objects that were hidden in the shadow of the first, second, and third shot.

The special armament throwing weapon that was modeled after a huge arrowhead belonged to a Divine Drag-Ride that Aeryl also recognized.

"Looks like she has come. It will be the critical moment after this you know, Alma? Be careful——"

"Not to lose myself you say? That's a stupid question."

Alma displayed a fearless smile from the appearance of her destined opponent.

"So that's Divine Drag-Ride Tiamat..... As expected from the princess of the New Kingdom huh, Ane-ue<sup>elder sister</sup>. You have a nice thing unlike me."

Several meters ahead of her gaze was Lizsharte who was similarly hovering above the main street.

She was the first one to arrive at this place after hearing of the appearance of the Azure Division, Alma Kilzrake and the speech of war

declaration.

"Alma..... Is that, really you? What were you doing until now?"

Lisha glared at Alma with a suspicious expression and questioned.

Alma scoffed in response.

"How easygoing you are Ane-ue. Are you being deceived by that aunt? Or perhaps you are blindly obeying her? I'm astonished when I heard that you are the princess of the New Kingdom who inherited father's dying will."

".....What do you mean!? Just what are you saying!? Why are you, my little sister, trying to hold the New Kingdom and us in contempt!?"

Alma carefully observed Lisha's reaction.

(As I thought, so, she doesn't notice Raffi's abnormality.....)

"I guess it can't be helped when it's still the first day..... Well, you will notice sooner or later. That the person Onee-sama is trusting and respecting is actually the source of all evil that is."

Lisha's gaze turned grim seeing Alma's curt attitude.

"I'll have you retract your statement just now. And then I'll ask you this. You are the one who is leading this so called Azure Division, kidnapped Aeril, and stole the Garden's Grand Force?"

"Those are some misleading words Ane-ue. It wasn't kidnapping, we were only rescuing the imprisoned Lord."

"Do you intend to talk about justice after disturbing the peace like this?"

In response Lisha also didn't back away in the slightest.

In this situation where citizens were watching, she was taking a resolute attitude as a princess.



If she was provoked then she would respond and retort back.

Lux formed the plan with that prediction and his perception of Lisha was right on the money. Alma was satisfied inside her heart.

She harbored a particular emotion towards her big sister who betrayed their father in the past and sided with the Old Empire, but right now the Black Hero's order was absolute.

"I wonder, which one of us actually has justice on our side? I'll teach that to you Ane-ue."

"Just try it!"

Lisha reached out towards her own sword belt and unsheathed her Sword Device.

Instantly the special armament Legion hovering around Tiamat spewed out fire and hummed before springing into action.

"You have grown violent during our separation for a while haven't you."

Alma took a stance with her medium sized Blade while dodging four Legions.

Because the basic specs of an EX Wyvern wasn't inferior even compared to a Divine Drag-Ride, she could oppose them enough with her mobility.

Thus, she had the leeway to dodge even without swinging her weapon—was how it should be, but,

[Alma! Behind you!]

".....What-!?"

Alma reacted to Aeryl's dragon voice and turned around.

In the sky several hundred meters behind her. The blue Divine Drag-Ride that appeared without any sound took a sniping stance and pulled the trigger

without delay.

The streak of light that was tinged with chilly air drew a silver track towards Alma.

"That Drag-Knight is——!?"

The special armament Freezing Cannon of the Divine Drag-Ride Fafnir fired a freezing bullet that was impossible to block.

It wouldn't be deflected by barrier, and even if it was blocked it would freeze the armor and seal movement.

Furthermore because it was a sniping from right behind her, she was unable to even react decently.

"So the Legions just now from the start was to lure me to dodge and guide me to the sniping point.....!"

But, as the guard Aeryl threw her Blade in front of Alma and barely stopped the freezing bullet from hitting directly.

One weapon was sealed but they avoided Alma getting restrained in this place.

"Don't let your guard down Krulcifer! They're a bunch with skills that can assault even the Garden!"

"Yes, I'll bear it in mind."

"Kuh.....!"

Lisha and Krulcifer communicated with each other while attempting the teamwork to launch a pincer attack once more.

It seemed the two were suppressing their strength because it was in an urban area, even so it would be over with one attack if she got hit fully once.

(What the hell.....! Now this is exasperating even for me. After all I intended to fight this kind of opponent as an equal.)

Alma desperately defended against the two's fierce attacks while a self-depreciating smile formed on her lips.

But, from the beginning she didn't think that she would be able to surpass Lisha and the others in offense and defense.

Her aim from the start was to fall into a disadvantage.

Alma evaded those attacks while quickly turning aside adroitly. She made her EX Wyvern to glide horizontally to escape.

If she flew in zigzag and weaved her way through the building's alleyway, the sniping would be sealed due to the obstacles.

"You're going to run away!? Alma!"

Lisha and Krulcifer were in pursuit, but with their Divine Drag-Ride, that size backfired and their movement was limited—or so it should be, but the two of them were overtaking Alma without difficulty.

(Tsu..... what speed!)

It wasn't just simple acceleration power.

Their proficiency in handling a Drag-Ride was abnormally high, so their movement felt even faster.

But, even while feeling nervous inside her heart, Alma succeeded in luring the two of them to the destination.

"Running away? I told you I'll teach you. About the sin of this country's queen! Howling Roar!"

The place that Alma arrived at was a large and old mansion—a burned down ruins.

When she released a shockwave from the head part of her EX Wyvern, the countless rubbles piled up below her were smashed away.

Underneath it—countless hands were reaching out from the ground that was scorched black.

"Wh, at..... This is!"

"Human.....corpses!?"

Lisha and Krulcifer looked down at that gruesome site while still clad in their Drag-Rides.

Around ten-odd burnt corpses were giving off odd scent.

"Now that the binding of world revision ended up imperfectly, even you two can perceive it right? This is the assassination that was carried out by the New Kingdom's queen Raffi!"

".....What did you say?"

Lisha stared at the ground with a dubious expression.

Bewilderment and confusion. However she shook her head left and right to sever her doubt.

"There's no way that's true! Only Haha-ue won't ever—! Don't you utter any nonsense!"

Lisha lifted her Sword Device once more and particles of light whirled at the surroundings. She summoned an additional armament.

The giant cannon Seven Heads, and then more throwing weapon Legion that increased in number until a total of twelve units.

Alma's skin was quavering from the powerful pressure of those two armaments.

(What, intimidation.....! Honestly.....it's terrifying!)

The next instant, Alma turned around and soared. She began an escape at full speed.

But, there was no way Alma could break down here.

Because Lux—the real Black Hero had saved her who was captured by the past resentment and tried to challenge into a fight with anger and resentment.

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## Part 5

"—Say Alma. Won't you stop with the revenge? Whether it's towards Lisha-sama and also Queen Raffi."

"....."

Several days ago.

Lux who succeeded in the mission to rescue Aeryl from the Garden and returned to Magialca's hideout learned the fact that Alma was Lisha's little sister and persuaded her like that.

The girl who idolized and believed in the Black Hero averted her gaze looking slightly awkward from being told that.

Looking objectively, what Lux said might be the right thing.

Lisha didn't turn traitor to the Old Empire because of her own wish, she could only choose that path in order to survive.

And then, even Queen Raffi who sold out Alma and the others didn't act because of malice. She was seduced by Waybra who was a spy from the Old Empire, got deceived, and lost everything.

"Both of them also went through painful things like you. They have suffered. Both Queen Raffi and Princess Lisha were troubled by their positions all this time."

They suffered from the weight of the sin they committed in the past while worrying about the responsibility burdening them.

Even so they fought against it.

They desperately lived in the New Kingdom trying to accomplish their duty.

"That's why, can you forgive them? At the very least, I wish that you won't resent the two of them in that respect. I beg you."

".....Why"

After looking down for a while, Alma looked up to Lux in wonder.

Her expression looked like she was baffled somewhere, as though she couldn't make any sense of him.

"Why are you, able to say something like that?"

Alma's voice wasn't filled with anything like anger or sarcasm.

She just felt puzzled that Lux who was living until now as a criminal of the Old Empire, that the young man who should be the target of hatred of many people was trying to stop Alma's revenge.

"Why, are you trying that hard to save them..... How can you be kind to people?"

"Because I know those two's feelings."

Lux instantly answered so towards that question.

"Because for this nearly one year, I spent time with them and watched them. That's what I thought. Nothing will start if you don't watch with your own eyes and try to know it better."

"....."

"Did they really abandon you, did they really have no other choice—. And can you forgive that, you should ascertain it with your own eyes."

(What—in the world)

Alma who heard that couldn't lift her face for a while.

During the several years where she fell into a harsh and painful environment, Alma needed something to support her heart in order to survive the cruel world.

However this young man—the Black Hero was trying to save even his enemy.

Whether it was in the past, and even now.

Her heart was struck by that nobility and strength.

"I.....understand."

Alma pondered a lot for several minutes and made her conclusion.

It wasn't simple to let go of the desire for revenge that she was amassing until now inside herself.

However, she decided to try fighting together with him in order to face it.



## Part 6

(I'm envious.....! Of that person's, the Black Hero's skill as a Drag-Knight and, his strength of heart!)

And then right now—Alma was pursued by two of the best Drag-Knights in the New Kingdom, Lisha and Krulcifer, while desperately heading towards the destination in order to accomplish her mission.

She slipped between the trees of a nearby forest in order to avoid the attacks of the two who excelled in long range attacks, even so she was approaching the verge of death every second.

But, the sniping using normal bullets that Krulcifer fired finally hit Alma's EX Wyvern.

".....Wha-!?"

Even though it was already an advanced technique just for flying between the trees that were clustered together, she went further and sniped through the gaps.

Alma was struck with admiration at that miraculous feat, at the same time her balance broke and she fell.

She somehow landed without crashing into the trees, but she was completely stopped.

"If the opponent's movement only has two choices of dodging or escaping left, then it will be easy to predict it even with this many obstacles."

Krulcifer who was clad in the Divine Drag-Ride Fafnir slowly descended from above Alma.

"Kuh.....!"

Alma immediately took a stance with her EX Wyvern's Blade, but the wrist of her armored arm was sniped and she dropped her weapon.

The battle was already decided with that.

"Unlike offense, defense and evasion demanded the smallest and fastest movement. That's why after seeing your movement several times it become easy to predict. After that, as long as I can grasp the area's terrain by sight, it will be possible enough for sniping."

"Wise Blood—so it's Fafnir's power of precognition.....!"

Even the strengthened type general purpose Drag-Ride EX Wyvern wasn't far behind the Divine Drag-Ride in specs, but as expected, taking on a powerful opponent who was able to skillfully use a Divine Raiment made the difference plain to see.

"I don't know what kind of great cause you have but, can you stop making anymore commotion? Everyone fought desperately to finally obtain this peace."

".....Fuh, peace huh."

In response Alma scoffed even while knowing that she was in a predicament.

"Is that so called peace, something that really exists? You're sharp to notice other people's flaws but, it looks like you don't notice anything at all about your own side's situation."

".....? I don't have any time for pointless talk. After all she already caught up."

Lisha who arrived right beside Krulcifer before anyone realized took aim with Seven Heads towards Alma.

Lisha was moving around to the opposite side in order to catch Alma in a pincer attack.

Alma was completely caught by Krulcifer's attack, but if she actually managed to dodge it then she would be caught by the net of gravity control from Tiamat's Suppressor.

The two members of Syvalles should already understand about the difference in strength just from this little time, but the way they fought without letting down their guard at all made Alma realize their threat level once more.

(Destroying the New Kingdom..... Defeating Queen Raffi and Fugil who are protected by this bunch and the Automatons while hiding our true colors will be next to impossible yeah.)

"Dispel your armor and surrender. If not then I'll blow you up here! You won't be able to endure it with EX Wyvern's barrier!"

The huge barrel of Seven Heads was already gathering energy.

The fear from having a weapon that would bring the fate of death thrust before her by her big sister.

On top of that, seeing how Lisha's hand was also touching her Sword Device, she intended to also use her Divine Raiment depending on the situation.

It was a hopeless situation where there wasn't any way to breakthrough.

But,

"Do you really think, that I showed up here only to get defeated?"

Alma lifted her Sword Device with a fearless expression even while being cornered into this predicament.

"—!"

The moment tension ran through the two from Syvalles, a black gale ran through before their eyes.

"Wha-.....!? Reinforcement!?"

"No! Perhaps it has been lurking here from the start!"

Krulcifer's voice cut off Lisha's yell.

Sight diversion.

Lisha and Krulcifer were wary towards Alma's Sword Device and their focus was turned towards it.

Although they were in an overwhelming advantage based on strength—no, exactly because of that overwhelming advantage that they focused on any strange movement.

From the previous information of the assault on the Garden and the kidnapping of Aeryl, it inevitably caused them to think of the true strength that the Azure Division was hiding.

That focus was used against them. Alma caused them to focus on herself and made the young man's surprise attack a success.

"U, aah.....!"

The Force Core that was located at the top of the armor's shoulder was slashed and the output of Tiamat that Lisha was wearing rapidly dropped.

The initial plan was for Alma on the ground to fly towards Lisha just before her armor was dispelled and she started falling, and then she would kidnap Lisha back to their hideout—but,

"—Shit-!"

".....Ouch!?"

Just before the armor was dispelled, Lisha reflexively threw Tiamat's Sword Device in her hand towards Alma.

This time it was the opposite. It was Alma whose attention was diverted by Lisha's action. In that instant, Krulcifer's Fafnir fired the freezing bullet that directly hit Alma's EX Wyvern.

"Uh, kuh!"

Lisha and Alma were simultaneously disabled from fighting and their respective armors were dispelled. Right after that, the remaining two Drag-Knights confronted each other.

"It seems you are that girl's trump card. Eerr—who could you be?"

The question of Krulcifer in her Fafnir wasn't responded to by the Drag-Knight in front of her.

A user of a Divine Drag-Ride clad in huge jet black armor. That was the only information she could obtain.

(This person.....? Who in the world—)

Krulcifer felt like she remembered that face and voice from somewhere, but for some reason she couldn't recall it, she didn't recognize the person.

Krulcifer had no way of knowing but for some reason, right now she was unable to recognize the young man in front of her.

"—I have no name to introduce to you two. I will simply carry out my mission."

"I see, so you are the true leader of this Azure Division."

Although it was a surprise attack, the opponent accelerated from quite far away and instantly took advantage of Lisha's opening to drive her into being incapable of fighting.

Krulcifer raised her guard against the opponent's strength and faced the Drag-Knight in black armor.

(The stage has been set! It's the main performance from here!)

Lux focused his mind like that and gazed at his opponent Krulcifer.

It was just as planned until this point.

He didn't know who else from Syvalles would come with Lisha, but no matter who came he knew that they would be a formidable enemy.

Why Krulcifer was unable to realize Lux's true identity?

The reason wasn't just from the mask that was hiding the area around his eyes, it was caused by a certain tactic that Lux set.

It was a tactic that he prepared in order to slay Fugil and Sacred Eclipse without anyone of the New Kingdom noticing it.

Lux already used the Coffin and finished strengthening his body through Baptism.

It still wasn't completely adapted to his body, but they were lacking time and manpower.

He wouldn't be able to reach Fugil at all if he was unable to manage a single tightrope walk here.

"If you don't have any intention to talk, then I'll make you talk. After I catch you that is."

Right after she muttered that with a tone that was mixed with resignation somewhere, Fafnir's armored arm quickly moved and pulled the trigger of the sniper rifle.

"-.....!?"

It was an instantaneous sniping from the gun barrel that was pointed down that took the opponent by surprise.

In order to defend against the freezing bullet, he immediately threw a Dagger as shield, but his initial movement was stopped completely by that action.

"Looks like you have also finished preparing countermeasures for Fafnir's special armament. In that case how about this?"

\*Tan-!\* This time she sniped with a normal bullet that was a mass of energy.

But, that sniping target wasn't Lux and Bahamut, but the trunk of a large and tall tree that surrounded the area like a cage.

A part of the trunk was largely gouged out and the tree was slowly collapsing towards the inside of the clearing.

The instant Lisha and Alma who were unarmored on the ground got their attention taken by that, Fafnir who was holding a medium sized Blade closed the distance in front of Lux.

".....uh, ku!"

Fafnir that was specialized in long range battle attempted a close range battle that should be disadvantageous for it.

The completely different tactic from Lux's impression of Krulcifer surprised him and made him doubt his eyes.

(No, if you think about it I guess it's only natural.....)

The accidental factor increased here deep inside the forest that was surrounded by obstructions, so it was also hard to use future prediction.

In addition the high speed movement to harass the enemy while launching precise sniping was also sealed.

Thus, even if it was somewhat disadvantageous, searching for a means of survival in close range battle would be plausible enough.

In fact, Krulcifer's sword skills using a Drag-Ride were also improving.

Therefore, Lux was forced into a one-sided defensive battle for several minutes—but,

(.....It's a chance! With this it will be easier for me to read her movements!)

Lux knew about the scope of Krulcifer's capability, but she right now didn't know that he was Lux.

In other words, it became easy for Lux to utilize his strong point that was seeing through the opponent's attacks.

He deflected Krulcifer's slashes one by one and made preparation to activate Reload on Fire.

Because Fafnir was protected by its special armament the seven shields—Auto Shield which was an automatic defense, he aimed to decide the battle in one go using a slash with super acceleration.

But,

"—Howling Roar!"

A vortex of shockwave was released from the head armor part Krulcifer wore and attacked Lux.

Because doing that when both sides were locking swords with each other would also cause the user themselves to get hit, Lux predicted that she wouldn't use Howling Roar, but—

".....-!?"

Seven shields were deployed in front of Krulcifer in order to defend against the after shock of the shockwave that was generated from close range.

"You used Auto Shield's automatic defense in this way!?"

Lux was blown backward one-sidedly. Krulcifer readied her sniper rifle to aim at Lux.



"My bad to do this when the plan of you guys has only started, but it's over with this."

She quickly pulled the trigger of the sniper rifle along with those merciless words.

—\*DON-!\*

A normal bullet impacted the shoulder armor of Lux who was completely unbalanced.

## Part 7

"Alma! Who in the world is that guy!? There aren't that many people in this world who can compete with that Krulcifer you know?"

".....Fuh, he is just a compatriot. You yourself, don't get conceited after getting helped out by various people."

On the other hand, at the same time when the intense battle was happening in the air.

Lisha and Alma were facing each other in the open spot of the forest.

Both of them had their armor dispelled and held their Sword Devices as weapons while only wearing their pilot suit.

The two of them wouldn't be able to use their Drag-Ride for a while after the hit on their Force Cores. Alma picked up the Sword Device of Tiamat that Lisha threw towards her and took a stance.

A strange scene of a duel of swords between fellow Drag-Knights was unfolding.

But, with a development of two versus two formed like this, and with how important the position of either sides was, this battle had a great meaning.

If one side could subdue the other earlier and took the other hostage, then the battle in the sky could also be decided at the same time.

The two sisters both understood that implication.

"It seems you are learning the good mannered sword fighting at the Academy, but can you fight in this messed up terrain?"

Alma said that in order to shake Lisha who wasn't used to fighting with swords.

In response Lisha was staring still at Alma with her hand holding a Sword Device she unsheathed from her sword belt.

"Or perhaps, you are also used to this kind of fighting? Onee-sama who betrayed the New Kingdom—betrayed father and became the Old Empire's assassin."

"Tsu.....!?"

Lisha bit her lower lip when her own dishonor was pointed out.

"The soldiers who attacked the hideout where I was five years ago told me. That Onee-sama turned traitor. You also know that it was Queen Raffi's fault that our father died don't you?"

"I know..... Your anger is justified. But! There is no meaning in venting your anger on the New Kingdom right now and drag the people into it!"

Lisha raised her voice and slashed with her Sword Device.

In response Alma also blocked it with Tiamat's Sword Device, averted the tip of the blade Lisha swung as though drawing the shape 'V', parrying it away.

Alma intentionally provoked Lisha to lure her to attack and aimed to counterattack.

The moment the tips of both swords were diverted, she tackled and sent her flying towards the direction of a tree trunk.

"Kuuh!"

The moment Lisha's balance crumbled, Alma straddled her and pointed her sword tip at Lisha's throat.





## Part 8

"—Reload on Fire!"

".....-!?"

The instant it looked like Krulcifer's precise sniping pierced through Lux's shoulder armor, crimson light of a Divine Raiment surged from Bahamut's armor.

He made himself as the center and performed compression strengthening to the effect of the impact energy—drastically damping the power of the first five seconds.

Therefore, Lux could barely turn aside the impact, then he further recovered his balance and flew towards Krulcifer who was above him.

"—Wise Blood!"

Krulcifer also immediately activated Fafnir's Divine Raiment.

She switched her weapon to the medium sized Blade once more and prepared for a close range battle.

(As I thought, this is Krulcifer-san's new tactic!)

Using the power of future prediction, she overpowered the opponent in close range battle where she was originally at a disadvantage. When she saw an opening she would use Howling Roar or the like to blow the opponent backward.

The moment the opponent's balance crumbled and a distance was opened, she would land a sure kill sniping with certainty and decide the battle.

Because she had Auto Shield, she wouldn't receive damage in close combat even if she forced herself a little.

It was a battle style that had obviously evolved from the tactic that was only relying on sniping while dodging.

".....-!? You, who in the world are you?"

But, after crossing swords several times, Krulcifer escaped by flying back without pushing off Lux.

She was sensing that she was losing in close range battle where originally she should be able to overwhelm the opponent with Wise Blood's future prediction.

"That Divine Drag-Ride Bahamut and Reload on Fire..... I know your way of fighting. Just, who are you? You are——?"

"....."

Krulcifer right now shouldn't notice Lux, nor would she be able to.

Even so it seemed she was feeling something from Lux. Lux felt completely silent seeing her behavior.

Lux resolved to fight alone in order to not drag the girls into it.

On the other hand, it was a really joyous matter that the girls were banding together in order to protect the New Kingdom.

However, Raffi would surely use Syvalles appropriately to corner Azure Division.

Therefore, he would defeat the elites of Syvalles except Yoruka one by one, make them unable to fight for a while, and aim for Raffi and Fugil.

That was the first step of Lux's plan that he had to accomplish during these ten days.

(I'm sorry, Krulcifer-san.)

Surely Lux also loved her.

But, most likely he would be unable to convey that feeling to her anymore.

Those three days of parade that occurred in reality were already vanishing into beyond her memory due to the world revision.

"HAAaAH!"

The moment Reload on Fire's effect ran out, Lux activated a secret technique of Drag-Ride control—Quick Draw.

He surpassed the deployment speed of Auto Shield's automatic defense, and landed a slash of the great sword on Fafnir's shoulder.



## Part 9

"The meaning of dragging the New Kingdom into it you say? Then why are you two——Raffi-obaasama and Onee-sama are staying as queen and princess then?"

Right after Lux's attack exploded into action in the sky above the forest, Alma and Lisha's battle was also nearing the conclusion for the time being.

Alma who was straddling Lisha had a tip of a Sword Device pointed at Lisha's throat.

"Especially Obaa-sama. After leaking information that put father into harm and sacrificed our whole family and clan, how is she able to stay in the New Kingdom with that unconcerned face? It's in order to protect herself and obtain benefit. People like that are telling me to not drag the people into it?"

"Alma....."

"My body..... is ingrained with terror. I was betrayed by the family I trusted and tasted hell. That's why I'm already.....unable to trust people from the bottom of my heart. Even if I pretend to trust, I'm scared somewhere inside. My world has been dark all this time."

Alma made a self-torturing smile and looked down at the pushed down Lisha.

She was betrayed by her aunt, her big sister, her blood relatives who she trusted. Her father was killed.

The wound of her heart that became unable to believe in people.

That was the impulse that drove Alma to take revenge in the Kilzrake family.

It was necessary for her to paint over her heart with rage in order to stifle the pain and survive.

Alma lived until now with that as her support.

If it was Alma from before, she might have stabbed Lisha's throat here.

But right now, Alma who had been persuaded by the Black Hero she idolized—by Lux Arcadia was simply observing Lisha's reaction with a focused gaze.

"I see..... As long as I am a princess, the people also won't be able to become unrelated. That's logical. Then, I'll take care of dealing with you! I'll take responsibility as someone who was unable to save you!"

".....-!?"

Agitation ran through Alma's face seeing Lisha's strong gaze.

In that moment, the nearby tree got hit by the sniper bullet of Krulcifer who was fighting above. It broke and fell towards the side of Lisha and Alma.

The trunk fell near the foot of Alma who immediately tried to dodge.

"Ukuh! Aaah.....!"

Fortunately because there was a slant on the ground, the angle was shallow and her foot wasn't crushed. But her movement was completely sealed.

On the contrary there was no effect to Lisha and she quickly picked up Tiamat's Sword Device.

(Damn it! With this, at this rate—!)

The table was overturned by the accidental happening.

The situation was reaching an impasse.

In order to save Krulcifer who was in an intense battle above, Lisha would surely take Alma as hostage at the very least.

Or perhaps if she was unlucky she would be killed as someone who introduced herself as the mastermind of Azure Division.

When Alma thought that, Lisha pulled out a new Sword Device from her sword belt.

"Alma, don't move! Your foot will be damaged if you move carelessly! Wyrms Claw!"

".....!?"

When Lisha yelled and thought strongly, a Drag-Ride in the shape of only giant armored arms was summoned.

The unit part for strengthening Tiamat, Wyrms Claw was something that was created from a general purpose Drag-Ride Wyrms, but unlike other simple weapons, it was equipped with its own power source that was a Force Core.

Therefore, although it was different from its original purpose, as long as the user was near it then it could be operated slightly.

"Just, what are you planning to——"

"Never mind that just don't move. I won't care even if your foot breaks you know"

Lisha kept her Sword Device raised in front of her eyes and controlled Wyrms Claw with mind control operation.

The armored arm that had claws attached softly lifted away the large tree on Alma's foot.

"....."

The large tree that fell off on the slanted ground raised a loud dull sound \*DON\*.

Alma who slowly stood up looked dumbfounded with her eyes wide open.

Alma stared in a daze at Lisha's figure who helped her little sister that she even threw away the absolutely advantageous situation.

"Do you want to erase your own sin by doing something like this?"

"No one is saying that. My sin and also the past cannot be erased. But, that guy taught me, that the answer will come if you think about what you yourself can do and face your own problem."

".....That guy?"

After asking that, Alma guessed that who Lisha referred to was Lux, the Black Hero.

"What I have to do no matter what as a princess is to persuade and stop you. You were hurt simply because I didn't have courage. But, this life that I obtained by betraying father, I want to use it for the sake of the New Kingdom that father wished for!"

Alma hung her head down at Lisha's straightforward words.

"Alma. I don't intend to tell you to believe me. But, is there any further end to this act of yours? If you say that I am walking on the wrong path, then I'll receive your criticism anytime. But, if you say that it's enough with just that.....if you are going to involve anybody else with force, then I'll stop you no matter how many times!"

"....."

Alma looked at Lisha's gaze and couldn't say anything.

She had tried facing her in reality.

She questioned her at the end of the battle, and heard her answer.

Now that she had learned her big sister's resolve, Alma completely lost her reason to resent Lisha.

(In the end, it's just as Black Hero-dono said huh.....)

Lux's words that wanted her to test Lisha and ascertain whether she would be convinced with that or not.

She was unable to accept it when she heard his words, but now after she crossed swords and exchanged their true feelings with each other, she was able to easily accept it.

But, the mission of Azure Division was still continuing unrelated with this.

Removing Sacred Eclipse that fused with Queen Raffi, and defeating Fugil who was carrying out world revision as the Hero of the Beginning. In order to do that, Lisha had to be kidnapped temporarily no matter what.

In order to not let Lisha and Syvalles to be burdened with the sin of destroying the New Kingdom too, she had to be captured here—

The moment Alma reached out to Lisha in order to restrain her— she heard a voice.

.

"Pile Anchor"

.

"Wha.....-!?"

Alma's body was instantly entangled with wire at the same time with a monotone voice of a girl. She was reeled into the thicket right beside her.

No one there could react towards that exquisite quick work that didn't even take one second.

(Phi-chan!? She came here!?)

—Or perhaps, it was reasonable to assume that she had rushed here just now?

Taking on three elites of Syvalles at the same time would be harsh even for Lux.

It was time to retreat.

"Kuh.....!"

Ignoring Krulcifer who was hit by a single stroke from Lux and lost her balance, Lux flew at low altitude with Bahamut and aimed at the dumbfounded Lisha.

"What are you doing! Let go-!"

Lisha immediately pointed Tiamat's Sword Device in her hand, but Lux repelled it with his armored arm.

The impact caused the four Sword Devices along with their sword belt to be taken off from Lisha's waist. They were scattered around.

Alma was taken away, but currently it was nearly impossible to recover her.

Therefore, Lux succeeded in kidnapping Lisha and then flew away in full speed.

"-.....!? You won't get away!"

Krulcifer who saw that hurriedly tried to pursue, but Lux's speed that was already using compression strengthening of time with Reload on Fire couldn't be overtaken.

The New Kingdom army and the Azure Division.

The battle in this place was temporarily halted with the key character of the opposition falling into the hands of the opposing camp.

## Part 10

".....Guh, uh! Dammit, let go-!"

Alma who saw Lux leaving with Lisha pretended to struggle in frustration, even so she sighed in relieve inside her heart.

Philuffy's appearance was surprising, but it was more or less within the expectations.

The worst case was it was Alma alone who was killed or fell into the New Kingdom's hand, but there would be no problem if she was exchanged with Lisha who was a princess.

The actual leader was Lux anyway. With the Azure Division obtaining a card that was the princess, the negotiation from now on would become smoother.

"It's dangerous to struggle you know? My Drag-Ride has claws. Errr.....your name, what is it?"

".....Alma Atismata."

"Princess's little sister, was it? I'm taking you back so don't struggle."

Even though it should be a dangerous situation for the New Kingdom that Lisha was kidnapped, and yet the girl in front of her didn't look agitated at all.

She was even interacting calmly with the enemy Alma without any change in her unique tone or atmosphere.

".....Haa, what a headache. Just who in the world that black Drag-Knight is——"

On the other hand, Krulcifer who gave up on chasing after Lux approached Alma and Philuffy.



She glanced at Alma who became quiet, and then she stared fixedly at Philuffy's face.

"You. The schedule should take quiet long for you but, are you fine already?"

"Yep. The fatigue from the Baptism is gone. The Coffin.....is already empty, so the next person."

(.....-! Baptism they say?)

Alma shuddered from hearing a certain word from the two's casual conversation.

A Coffin was one of the Ruin's important equipment. It could perform the operation to strengthen the body.

Alma herself had a relatively light strengthening as a test run, but in case Elixir was used to strengthen the body, it would put a large burden on the body. Because of that there was a risk of death.

For such procedure to be applied to the elites of the New Kingdom by turn, it could be assumed that Queen Raffi's countermeasure was to send the girls to directly clash with the Azure Division.

(However, this is a miscalculation. If even these girls got strengthened by Baptism, Lux-san who wants to defeat them one by one will be forced into really hard battles.)

Even at the battle just now Lisha and Krulcifer weren't going at full strength.

Lux's remaining cards were only Yoruka, Aeril, and then Magialca and the Drag-Knights of the Kilzrake family. But there was none among the subordinates who would be able to contend with Krulcifer, Philuffy, and Celis.

From here on ahead, strategy that was even more risky would be necessary.

The two girls were still in discussion in front of Alma who was getting even more nervous like that.

"After this, what to do?"

"We don't know where the enemy is going, there is also this girl who we captured. Looks like we can only return to the city for now and consult with her majesty Raffi. Besides—the enemy also handed something like this."

Krulcifer lifted her fingertips while replying to Philuffy's question.

There, her fingers were holding a single letter that was left behind by Bahamut that flew away.

# **Chapter 3 – The Servant’s Decisive Battle**

## Part 1

In the royal capital Lordgalia, inside a room of the castle, Fugil was watching a certain illusion.

Fugil Arcadia had no need for sleep.

The body that had been strengthened with Baptism in the level that normal person couldn't endure already didn't even need to sleep.

And so many times he would be simply watching the moon and stars from the window at night for a brief time.

Each time the illusion, the sight that was burned in his mind would be replayed before his eyes.

Even now he was watching it.

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"—Fugil. Have you gotten used of living in the castle?"

More than a thousand years ago inside the castle of Arcadia Empire.

Fugil was addressed by the imperial princess Arshalia in a corridor that was built from sturdy rocks.

She summoned Fugil who was from the hostile clan of traitor to become her servant. He was made to receive education for becoming a close aide.

Of course it was an unprecedented affair. The girl called Arshalia possessed the authority to accomplish something that originally was thought to be absolutely impossible.

"Living in the castle? There is nothing but unpleasant things. I can eat here but the comfort here is the worst. It's really a bother which is your fault. I also got this kind of collar attached on me. It's a criminal collar called the Wedge is it? Just what have I done to deserve this huh."

"Is that so, surely you will get used to it, and that collar will be taken off one day. Let's do our best so that you can be accepted by everyone for even a day faster!"

‘.....She isn't listening.’

Fugil muttered in exasperation and looked aside.

The disparity in the hierarchical society of Arcadia Empire that was connected to a clan called Xfer and amassed prosperity was gradually widening. The oppression of the imperial family was reaching the extreme.

They strengthened their physical body with Baptism and obtained long life and excellent ability, but the Elixir that was necessary for that was created from the life of human—especially from their brethren.

Thus, people with low status were hunted by the nobles.

They were exploited not only as labor, but even their life was sucked dry.

The bloodline of the people who became the core of the resistance that rebelled against the royalty and nobility that were excessively tyrannical was the clan of traitor. The imperial family considered them as enemy and both sides continued to fight for long.

In such situation, Fugil who was a child from that clan was picked up by Arshalia. It was the beginning of a strange relationship.

The imperial family and the people in the palace thought that it must be Princess Arshalia's whim. Even Fugil thought that was the case.

However, on the contrary of such situation that was surrounding them, Fugil's talent as Drag-Knight was rapidly blooming within his capacity as the princess's aide.

"—Fugil. Can I ask your unit to suppress the resistance? If other people go, they will slaughter all their enemies. Ah, it's okay to not capture them. After all they will be killed if they're captured."

When Fugil was at the tender age of 14, he had become a Drag-Knight that couldn't be matched by anyone else. One day, Arshalia gave him that order.

Even Fugil was recognizing Arshalia's intelligence, but sometimes she would speak this kind of hypocrisy. He disliked it as usual.

"Not only you're making me to face the clan of traitor, you also tell me to let them escape alive? Even malice will feel refreshing when it comes until this far huh."

"You don't want to do that? I thought that's what Fugil also wish for though——"

".....What do you mean?"

When Fugil asked back with a dubious expression, Arshalia asserted with a meaningful smile.

"Don't tell anyone else okay? You see, actually I——am scheming for peace with all of you. Won't you try changing this world where there is only hatred for each other and where someone with weak position will only become sacrifice?"

The confident smile of the girl who told him that was burned into his eyes.

"Ridiculous. Do you think the like of human can change the world?"

Fugil spat out those words, even so his heart was stolen for an instant.

The two's challenge started from there.

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## Part 2

"This is really problematic. To think that Lisha will be kidnapped——"

Fugil's mind returned to reality.

In the castle, Raffi heard the report that Lisha was kidnapped by a Drag-Knight of Azure Division from a soldier of the New Kingdom just now.

At present, within the ten days period until the binding of world revision from Uroboros was released, three days had passed with this.

Using the Coffin, the strengthening of the elite members of Syvalles was done one after another. The Baptisms were succeeding without problem.

It was something possible exactly because it was those girls who had experience of receiving Elixir before and trained both in mind and body, but they also knew that a factor of the success was because of their feeling toward Lux.

The successes were exactly because the girls had the strong feeling to put their life on the line in order to solve this case in the place of Lux who needed to do reckless things one after another until now.

However, the current situation other than that was surpassing Raffi's estimation.

According to the report from Krulcifer and Philuffy, they learned that there was a Drag-Knight with strength that far surpassed Alma Atismata.

It would be fine if that was all, but on the other hand there was the report from Celis that Lux didn't take even a single step out of the inn.

"It seems there wasn't any sign of that foolish little brother moving from the beginning. There was also the common soldiers keeping watch there correct?"

"Yes, of course it was kept secret from the girls of Syvalles though."

She gave detailed explanation to Celis to strictly watch over Lux. But on the other hand she also made soldiers disguising themselves as civilian to watch the inn's surrounding with the pretense that it was for Lux's safety on the surface but—in the end, there wasn't any confirmation that Lux went out.

But regardless of that, there was a strange conviction within Raffi.

That it surely wouldn't be a mistake to consider that the Azure Division ambusher who defeated Krulcifer and kidnapped Lisha was most likely Lux.

"Why are you focusing that much on my foolish little brother? It won't be strange even if this Azure Division has their own hidden powerful person isn't it?"

"You are saying that? I thought that you're the one who is far more concerned about Lux than me though."

Raffi replied to Fugil with a wry smile.

And then she stood up from the sofa and straightened her posture before turning back toward Fugil.

"I understand for the first time after getting into this position. For a ruler, there is nothing more troublesome than turning Lux Arcadia into enemy. In any event we've managed to recover Alma Atismata, but now that the function of Avalon has become incomplete, even the brainwashing cannot be done so simply. Let's leave here in a house arrest."

The letter that Krulcifer received from the black Drag-Knight of Azure Division was held up in front of Raffi's eyes and she read it.

There, the request of hostage exchange from Azure Division was written.

The place would be decided several more days by Azure Division. If Alma wasn't safe at that time, Lisha's life wouldn't be guaranteed, it said.



In addition they sought a decisive battle that put the Grand Forces at stake. That was the gist of the letter.

"The opponent also understand. That I'll have to respond to this dealing....."

Within the remaining seven days, the binding of world revision that was currently working on Lordgalia was dissolving. People who were feeling that the change of Raffi's appearance was strange would be appearing.

No, for Raffi who was completely fused with Sacred Eclipse, there was a problem that she should be even more worried and dreaded about.

In short, she had to win this battle without fail and collected the Grand Force, and then using Avalon and Uroboros she had to execute Endless—the perfect world revision.

"In everything, if there is advantage then there will be disadvantage too, that's how it is. Not a single thing has changed since the time I was struggling to steer this country isn't it."

Raffi let out a small sigh and shrugged in lamentation.

"Then, will you stop?"

The automata Arshalia suddenly asked, but Raffi shook her head.

"No way. I will fight until the end. However, if we have to take back Lisha, then we won't be able to do anything too cruel to Alma then."

"Do you plan to use it? The ability of Ragnarok?"

"Just for a bit. I will only discipline my mischievous niece. I'm thinking to show my memory to that child who is saying that she has tasted a really bothersome past until now. Aa—I also have to replenish my nourishment soon. Previously I failed to eat after all."

While whispering that her irises were tinged with bewitching light of seven colors.

Raffi who fused with Sacred Eclipse that took in the ability of seven Ragnaroks and became a complete being could use each ability by her own will.

She was walking while making steady sound of footsteps toward the dungeon where Alma was locked.

What she would use was the ability of the great demon Ragnarok—Iblis's mental pollution.

Because it would also use a lot of energy to use the ability, she couldn't use them recklessly right now, but there was a need to experiment.

It seemed that Alma herself was strengthened with Baptism and her resistance toward mental interference was strengthened, so she wouldn't be affected fatally.

There was also the possibility that the dealing would be called off if Alma's mind was broken, so she couldn't do anything rash.

Therefore, right now her ulterior motive was to use that power to harass Alma.

Before long the girl's groan echoed at the castle's underground prison, and several hours later even that voice vanished.

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## Part 3

"Fuu....."

Right now Lux was slowly soaking in the bathtub of the large public bath of the high class inn that was only occupied by Syvalles members.

After Lux kidnapped Lisha, shook off the pursuer, and headed to the rendezvous point with Azure Division members, he safely returned to the inn.

His coming and going behind the back of Celis—or perhaps other watchers wasn't realized by anyone of the Academy. He was using a certain method for that.

Perhaps even that method would be noticed sooner or later, but right now he couldn't let anyone realized.

It was necessary for Lux to keep hiding his true identity while fighting the New Kingdom, but it was straining his nerves a lot.

Therefore, after safely returning to the inn, he was completely tired that he was unable to even move satisfactorily.

Even the bath of this inn that was completely reserved by Relie couldn't be compared with the Academy's large public bath, but it was still quiet spacious.

Thanks to that he could take a short rest, and it was displaying an outstanding result.

(It was unfortunate that Alma was taken away but, our objective of securing Lisha-sama was accomplished.)

At the current time his strategy against New Kingdom was barely at the passing mark.

Seven days remaining until the estimated day where the world revision dissolved.

He was worried about Alma, but now that the alteration to people's memory couldn't be done anymore, they shouldn't be able to do anything too rough to her.

On the other hand, the captured Lisha was being managed by Aeryl who returned to the hideout of Kilzrake family.

The power of Baptism in Aeryl's eye once showed herself as a young man called Coral to Lux and others. Just like that she was making Lisha to mistake her as someone she didn't know.

With that, for the time being it should be going well there.

The letter that he threw to Krulcifer was one of the several letters that he had written beforehand. It gave an advance notice for the decisive battle that put the Grand Force on the line.

The schedule for the battle would be at the ninth day. Until then there were several things that had to be accomplished no matter what.

Locating Avalon that was transported to this New Kingdom.

Regarding that matter—, right now he was only relying on Yoruka.

Lux also had to rest for the time being.

Due to the Baptism of ability strengthening that was done to his body the other day, an irregularity appeared due to the excessive burden.

But, thanks to that he should be able to climb a step higher to a new height as a Drag-Knight.

"After that, Phi-chan. Is she alright?"

During the parade, she was getting high fever due to the effect of doing intense battle with the Ragnarok's seed still residing inside herself.

That was why he thought she wouldn't be able to participate in the battle this time but, because of that he was taken by surprise before this.

If she had gotten better then it would be fine but, if he ended up fighting Philuffy, he would have no choice but went full strength even if he had to be a bit reckless.

Because he couldn't put burden on her body, there would be no choice except making her Drag-Ride unable to function in the shortest and fastest way.

He resolved himself like that while submerging his body inside the bathtub, it was then—.

"That, Lux..... How is the hot water feeling?"

Celis's slightly high-pitched voice came from outside the bath's sliding door.

That in itself was strange if he thought carefully.

But Lux who was freed from the extreme tension and got completely relaxed in this break didn't notice that out of place sign.

"—Yes. The hot water is really nice."

"The, then, is it okay if I also come in.....?"

"Yes, feel fre—.....eh?"

Lux fundamentally only prioritized the stance of agreeing with other and replied positively, but a moment later, a question floated on the back of Lux's mind.

—But, it was already too late and a shocking sigh was unfolding before his eyes.

\*Garari\*, the sliding door was slowly opening and Celis entered the bathroom.

Furthermore, she was wearing a sexy red swimsuit.

".....Wait, eeeeh!?"

After a few seconds of blinking his eyes repeatedly, Lux was taken aback inside the bathtub.

The small waves created inside the bathtub showed how surprised he was.

"Tha, that, I come to....., wash your back. I believe that your body cannot move well so, it will be especially hard in the bath——"

"Wait-!? That's, this is"

"Hahahahaha. Just obediently let yourself get spoiled by the good will of your seniors. No matter how strong of a boy you are, you're still a junior in the Academy."

"This is, outside the Academy though!?"

He retorted back to the words of Sharis that came from outside the sliding door, but only the theatrical loud laughter of the girl came back.

With that he was able to grasp the current situation.

Certainly he had weakened to the degree that he couldn't freely move his body, but he had told them that he was able to go to toilet by himself at least.

And yet for Celis to suggest of helping him in the bath like this must be 100% the consideration of Sharis who had a big-sisterly disposition.

Right now it had become a situation where the girls couldn't confess to Lux once more, but most likely Sharis also knew about Celis liking Lux and so she did this.

(But, even so that, something like this——)

The matter of Lisha being kidnapped by Azure Division was kept quiet by Queen Raffi for the time being after hearing the report from Krulcifer. The members in this inn still hadn't been told.

This was a prank because they didn't know about the situation behind the scene....., no, if from the position of Sharis who was Celis's friend, perhaps this was her exquisite consideration for Celis.

In any case, Lux thought to stop this in panic but—,

".....-!?"

He saw the swimsuit figure of Celis who came in front of him and his mind became pure white.

This one had greater exposure than the one she wore at the training camp in Ries Island. The skin color that was peeking out from the risqué red fabric overwhelmed him.

The line of two cloths that looked like oblong ribbon covered along the outer side of the heavy breasts. The center of her stomach was in full view.

Perhaps in a sense it was even lewder than simply being naked.

Lux's throat gulped despite his own will. The blood was rising until his ears.

"Ce, Celis-senpai. That swimsuit is—"

"Tha, that is, I didn't happen to bring any so, I ordered from the shop of Tillfur's acquaintance but, that, they said that right now this is the only one they have—"

(.....That's absolutely a lie-!)

Lux was convinced of that, but it would be meaningless even if he said that here.

"Ple, please don't mind me. I'm only worrying about Lux's body, I won't do anything else."

In the first place, would she have any composure to do anything else?

He thought, but there was also no way he could act alright here and strongly opposed this.

Until the arranged day of the decisive battle against the New Kingdom's army, he would need to pretend that his body was mostly unable to move by his own strength.

"I'm sorry. Celis-senpai....."

The voice inside his heart and his words in reality synchronized.

He would be lying in respond to Celis's consideration, but it would also be unnatural to flatly refuse her assistance here.

"Then, excuse me. —Ah!"

First Celis tried to pull up Lux by putting her hands on both of Lux's sides from the front and held him up.

But Lux's body seemed to be unexpectedly heavy for her because his whole body was too relaxed and he didn't support his body with his own strength. Celis hurriedly try to support his weight and ended up in a pose of catching him in her embrace.

—\*Mugyuu\*.

"Uh.....!?"

Lux was embraced by Celis who was wearing a swimsuit with small surface covering with his face buried between her cleavages.

IN addition the skins that were wet with hot water were intertwined closely. His whole body jumped.



"Lu, Lux..... Are you alright!? Your body——"

His heart was drumming rapidly, and his eyes were swirling.

His body was worsening in a different meaning, but there was no way he could speak the truth.

He was in such confusion while enduring the blazing fire that felt like it was burning his mind to ash. It was then the sliding door was opened once more and even Sharis also entered.

She was wearing the same swimsuit that she wore previously at the beach of Ries Island, but when he saw it not at the beach but in the bathroom, it gave him a different impression.

The size of her breasts wasn't particularly big compared to Celis or Philuffy, but there was no doubt that it was a woman's body with nice style.

"Oops..... I thought it will be difficult with her alone so I came to help but, perhaps I'm being a bother?"

"Wait, even Sharis-san, what are you doing!?"

Sharis who saw Lux who was in the embrace of Celis turned red while averting her gaze.

Celis tried to do something about their posture somehow at that chance. He carried Lux and sat him down on the chair at the washing place.

He only barely made it in time with wrapping a towel around his waist.

"Don't be that angry. This too is a bit of passing fancy—I mean, kindness toward our junior. That's why I too am holding back my shame like this to help out."

"Haa.....is that so"

He already lost even his motivation to make any retort.

"However, thinking now this is a bit overdoing it. I'm sorry Lux-kun. It didn't cross my mind that there will be a situation that is too joyful for boy it will cross over to be a painful situation."

"The, then..... Err, what're we going to do now?"

Celis who couldn't keep up with the talk asked in bewilderment.

The timid, embarrassed, and flustered figure that was unlike the usual Celis also heightened the emotion within Lux but—he took a deep breath and chased away the worldly thoughts.

Because if he didn't do that, it felt like he would be carried away by the situation.

"Let's see. For now let's wash his body for him just as planned. Ah, Lux-kun, please do the front part by yourself okay? But if you want help for it no matter what, then ask Onee-san about it later."

"Now see here....."

Lux let out a deep sigh at Sharis's teasing while Celis was scrubbing his back clean.

After that, Lux was put back inside the bathtub, then Sharis seemed to take the role of bringing him until the dressing room after that.

Speaking of Celis, it seemed the stimulation for the girl was also too strong. After they were finished she was soaking herself in the bathtub while staring still at the ceiling absentmindedly.

Lux sent a glance at her while Sharis was lending him a shoulder and they entered the dressing room but—.

"Celis surely like Lux-kun, so I thought of making the chance for you two to get along but—it looks like I was a bit carried away. Sorry."

Sharis quickly changed first into a casual outfit of short sleeved shirt and short pants.

She briskly wiped dry the hair of Lux who wore his underwear while she smiled wryly in guilt and apologized.

Lux who saw that was taken aback and could only look down.

That was because in the end, the fact that Lux's body was able to move normally didn't end up getting discovered.

Conversely if he wasn't thinking about pretending, then even Lux didn't know how the situation just now would develop into.

That was just how stimulating the happening just now.

"It's alright..... More importantly, you said just now, Sharis-senpai to me is——"

They were talking with small voice behind the sliding door, so Celis who was in the bathtub wouldn't hear.

But, Lux was slightly feeling guilty to have this kind of talk at a place where she wasn't present.

"Somehow, this isn't like Sharis-san. Today you're more talkative than usual or rather——"

He knew that she liked to be mischievous but, he thought that her stance in regard to something like this was to observe for distance.

"Is that so? Right. I guess so..... Surely it's like that."

Sharis who was told that softly patted Lux's head with a voice that sounded somewhat kind, or perhaps lonely.

Sharis who was right behind Lux who was sitting on a chair softly hugged Lux's head.

No, she was only touching and combing back his hair.

"I thought that we'll be able to give up easily if you and Celis get together you see. That's how it is for me at least."

"Eh.....?"

Lux tilted his head hearing the girl's unexpected words.

Right after that, he felt the breast's bulging pressed tightly on the back of his head and his body reflexively jumped.

"Wait-, Sharis-san!? What're——"

"Tell me if you dislike it. How should I say it, when we were defeated by Sir Singlen's aide at the abandoned capital Guernica and almost died, I thought about various things. Like, all this time I was just trying to look cool wasn't I."

Sharis continued to whisper to Lux with a tone that sounded somewhat intoxicated.

"I didn't have the intention to live while putting on a bold front like Celis. I thought that I was living having fun as I like with a freedom in my own way separately from my position as the daughter of the army's vice commander. But, it seemed I was just putting on airs. I belatedly noticed that in this parade. As I thought it was love at first sight since the first meeting."

"Sharis, san?"

"Haa..... But, I know that your heart is leaning toward someone among those five. Oops, if Aeryl is also included then it's six I guess."

After she finished drying Lux's hair, she lightly patted Lux's head and lent Lux her shoulder.

"It's nothing. I was only thinking, that it would be nice if there's also that kind of future. Now, Lux-kun you need to rest properly. Besides, if I don't return quickly, Celis will get dizzy in there."

".....Yes. You're right."

There was no way that even the dull Lux wouldn't notice after being told that much.

That Sharis was a good natured older senior with candid personality who had considerable feeling for Lux.

He thought that it was the extension of a friendly relationship of senior and junior who got along well, but most likely she was also having that kind of feeling all this time.





It was exactly because she was an older person who was skilled in getting along with others that she was watching her surrounding from a bit of distance away where she could be composed, so she didn't notice her own feeling until the very last minute.

She was a girl who was smooth and yet awkward.

Lux thought that side of hers was somewhat similar with him in some respect. He felt a prickling pain in his chest.

"By the way Lux-kun, is it okay even if I kiss you?"

"Eh!?"

Sharis lent Lux her shoulder while walking through the corridor when she turned an adult smile toward him.

The bulge of girl's chest that was touching Lux's body, and the scent of rose perfume which was her favorite caused him to strangely feel startled.

"I'm just joking. After all I'll be scolded by everyone if I do that here."

She said that and turned her gaze forward. There Airi and Noct were waiting in front of Lux's room.

However the expressions of the two were looking completely serious which didn't seem to be related with Lux getting help within the bath.

"Nii-san. I want to talk. Actually, I was lost whether I should tell this to Nii-san at your current state but——....."

It seemed that the matter of Lisha's kidnapping had been told from Queen Raffi.

The contact of hearts with the older girls.

Right now there wasn't even any time to immerse himself in the lingering feeling of it.



But, he apologized in his heart toward Sharis who was interacting with him while harboring affection to him and made a face as though he had only just heard about the detail of Lisha's kidnapping for the first time. He prepared himself to respond to the discussion after this.

.

## Part 4

At the time when the discussion about the kidnapping of Lisha by Azure Division and the countermeasure for that was starting at the high class inn that Relie reserved.

A single girl was standing in the darkness of the night at the residential area of the wealthy.

Something was devouring and sipping the lumps of meat that were people just a few minutes ago while making slurping sound or the sound of dragging something on the ground.

Citizens who were grimacing at that hellish picture that was repulsive and appalling didn't exist.

Several hundred people were living in that area. They were mainly the dependents—near relatives or close relatives, or perhaps the relatives or servants of the senior consuls that were called as Old Empire faction. They were gathered at the burnt down mansion without leaving a single one behind and then they were killed and eaten by turn.

"....."

Fugil was staring at that scene with an empty expression.

The reason why the Sacred Eclipse that had become a complete being was called as the trigger of world's destruction was there.

It was a humanoid Ragnarok that boasted overwhelming destructive power and ability, but for its energy source, it needed to constantly prey on human.

It was a function that the girl who was Fugil's friend—Arshalia originally wasn't planning for.

The salvation system that she was trying to create got poisoned by other people who were trying to steal it and ended up into something different.

The one who knew that at present in this world was only Fugil.

The Sacred Eclipse right now so to speak was the ruins of an incomplete dream.

Fugil who was called the Hero of Beginning and the imperial princess Arshalia who was called the Goddess of Salvation.

The two of them continued to chase the dream from a thousand years ago, and hten.

.

.....\*Gucha gucha, picha picha. —Gulp-.\*

.

Of course, even Raffi who was fused into Sacred Eclipse was taken over by the cannibalism instinct.

She was barely maintaining her reasoning to select the people that she was devouring, but if her hunger progressed then she would transform into a monster that devoured any human she could reach.

However, there was a repulsive reality that was even more inexplicable than that.

People who were approaching toward her who was devouring human didn't stop coming.

They were heading toward Raffi with staggering footsteps as though being enticed like livestock to be slaughtered for their meat.

Her hands were lightly tearing apart human like they were bread that she was going to soak into a soup. She was eating wholeheartedly.

The nightmarish sight was floating in the jet black darkness where it was impossible to see several ml ahead.

It was only just now that there was a witness to that hellish scene.

(What.....in, the world!? That monster is!?)

This Drag-Knight who originated from Marcafal Kingdom was ordered by Magialca to search for Avalon's location. He was investigating various places in New Kingdom in his search.

It was a digression but, only Drake users were given the investigation mission, the remaining members were standing by.

They weren't allowed to do any combat. If they were discovered they were ordered to escape. It was in consideration of the enemy's overwhelming battle strength.

After all there were the elites of Syvalles, and in addition the modified Automatons were also battle strength that ought to be feared even more than that..

But, the young man witnessed the secret of Queen Raffi here was mostly a coincidence.

Because there wasn't really anything that could be called a clue, he returned here to the crime scene wondering if there was something remaining here. It was unknown whether he was lucky or unlucky.

"Are you a member of Azure Division?"

".....-!?"

Raffi suddenly turned toward the bush where the young man was lurking and smiled gently.

The face of the girl who had returned to her senses as human was gentle, however her mouth and dress were dirtied all over with black blood.

(How, does she notice me who am hiding? I'm using Drake's camouflage here!)

"It's not a praiseworthy manner to peek at someone's meal. It's also disrespectful to not reply. And then, the biggest problem is your foolishness. Even though you already understand in your heart that you're beyond help, you don't try to suicide. You're clinging to the hope that someone will save you or I will overlook you. Or perhaps you're thinking—this woman is just bluffing, but actually she doesn't know exactly where I am? You're betting on such fragile hope."

Queen Raffi slowly without any sound of footstep approached the young man.

With that well ordered face that had transformed into the appearance of a girl around the age of sixteen, she peered into the eyes of the young man and laughed.

"But you know, I understand your feeling. Because in the past I was also like that, so even if you know that you have to die, it's scary to actually do it. Death is....., scary. It's really scary."

"....."

The voice was sweet, kind, creeping into his heart.

The young man's consciousness was getting distant just from listening to that. He was forgetting himself into a pleasant sensation.

"That's why, I'll give you a chance. Won't you cooperate with me? If you tell me everything that you know, I will allow you to be useful beside me. So, how about it?"

"A, AAAaAAAAAH.....!"

Raffi's hand softly reached out and caressed the front hair and head of the young man who was standing still forgetting to even breath.

The sound, light, the sensation of touch on the skin.

It was the ability of Ragnarok Iblis that polluted other people's mind through the five senses.

Because right now the method of brainwashing to make him confessed couldn't be done, Raffi threatened him with fear to make him spoke.

The young man barely maintained his reasoning only until there.

He abandoned his sense of self and left it to Raffi as though a baby entrusting himself to his mother.

After conversing with Raffi for several minutes, his life was absorbed as nourishment.

(.....)

And then there was the shadow of one more Drag-Ride in this place.

There was a girl watching over the extremely repulsive predation of Sacred Eclipse without even twitching her eyebrow.

The girl in black clothes—Kirihome Yoruka wasn't moved at all by the young man's death. She was simply analyzing the situation calmly.

Although her Drag-Ride was the same special equipment type like the young man, the Divine Drag-Ride Yato no Kami's camouflage ability was far higher.

In addition she was also several kl further away from the young man, so Raffi didn't notice her watching everything from start to end.

The distance was insufficient in order to obtain image recording, but it could be said to be enough to report to Lux.

Rather since the young man was captured, she did nothing but focusing on the two's conversation to not miss anything.

(That's, really bad. My mind will be polluted just by approaching near, and if I let my presence slip even if only slightly she will detect me.)

Sacred Eclipse that had become complete was emitting dangerous aura that gave even Yoruka the premonition of death.

Most likely it possessed strength that was several levels higher than the Ragnaroks until now.

It wouldn't be wrong to consider this act as Raffi replenishing her energy and stocking power intended for the decisive battle in several more days.

She had to grasp the location of Avalon quickly, but she was unable to grasp any clue.

While Yoruka was thinking of what to do, a bush suddenly swayed from wind.

"\_\_\_\_\_"

That in itself wasn't suspicious at all. But,

\*Dosu dosu dosu-!\*

Her curious intuition worked and Yoruka instantly leaped away. In that instant, countless needles stabbed the ground where she was standing at just now and opening many holes.

".....? How did you dodge? Even if you are a strengthened human who had received Baptism, you should have been completely taken by surprise just now. Can you tell me for the sake of future reference?"

Unnoticed there was a Drag-Knight clad in a huge green armor that slipped into the darkness of the night.

Cold expression that wasn't colored by any emotion and pilot suit that fitted the body.

And then, the mechanical feelers that were like ant growing from the head showed how she was an Automata.

"That's a face I've never seen before."

"Right you are, this is our first time meeting. I am the Gear Leader managing the first Ruin Babel, Yos Tork is my name."

"I am—not someone worth mentioning."

The Automata introduced herself politely, in respond Yoruka also replied calmly.

"By the way, what are you doing over here?"

Yors Tork questioned further.

Until now the Automatas were hidden by the perception modification by Uroboros's Divine Raiment—Endless and they were able to maneuver secretly without anyone noticing, but at present there wasn't anything like that.

Therefore, Yoruka encountering Yos Tork here hinted at a certain fact that she noticed.

"I see. This place, it's related with the hidden location of Avalon isn't it——"

"....."

Yos Tork didn't make a single twitch at Yoruka's muttering.

But, the emotionless face of Automata felt like it tensed slightly.

".....You bastard, are you a member of the aforementioned Azure Division?"

"What's that? Azure what again? I don't know anything about that."

"It seems there won't be any other way to ask rather than using brute force..... Should we begin, swordsman in black?"

Yos Tork seemed to judge that there was no meaning in anymore talk. Her emerald colored Drag-Rides glided forward.



"My Divine Drag-Ride's name is Peluda. You can savor it thoroughly!"

The heavy class land battle type Drag-Ride skated on the ground and charged with a fierce momentum.

In reply Yoruka took a great jump backward using her Drag-Ride's Step. And then she activated her camouflage once more.

"It looks like you don't know the basic of fighting huh? —Break Purge!"

In that moment, Yos Tork activated the basic technique of Drag-Ride, Break Purge.

".....!?"

Yoruka who attempted to slip into the darkness of the developing district where there wasn't any sign of people spontaneously tilted her head inside her heart.

Because unlike Howling Roar that unleashed shockwave, Break Purge that was removing a part of one's own armor wasn't a technique to be used at the beginning of the fight simply.

This technique that released one's own armor as buck shot caused the user to also lose parts of their armor, because of that it was a double edged sword.

Someone like Celis would restrict which part and how many would be released. She used it to discard defense and switched into a form specialized for offense.

Or perhaps it would be used for emergency evacuation when defending, or to erase any opening when switching between multiple Drag-Rides. Those kinds of use should be the standard practice but—.

\*Gakikiki-.....!\*

The bullets of armor parts were fired to wide area.

Yoruka leaped and dodged them while easily deflecting the remaining buckshot with her katana shaped Blade.

But, her camouflage was dispelled because she attacked. Her figure came into view.

"It was your foolishness to escape to the air without thinking."

Yos Tork and Peluda chased after Yoruka who leaped to the air and launched an attack.

A weapon of giant hammer was swung up and then swung down with tremendous speed.

—But,

"That's a misunderstanding there. —<sup>Void Step</sup>Karafumi"

The lips of Yoruka that became inverted up and down in the air formed a slight smile.

She kicked on a jet black empty air and leaped aside and dodged the hammer that seemed impossible to avoid while slashing horizontally at Peluda.

".....What-!?"

Karafumi was a special armament that was equipped within the four armored legs of Yato no Kami. It caused wind from the soles of the feet to make it possible to leap midair.

In other words, it became possible to flexibly react even during the middle of falling where normally Drag-Ride other than flying type would become defenseless.

"Furthermore, kicking on the air while slashing at the same time of dodging. Your skill isn't common."

"It's an honor to receive such praise. But—you are really composed despite that. Even though you already lost—"

The next instant after Yoruka responded to Yos Tork's admiration, gradually mysterious purple letters were floating from a part of Peluda's armor.

The Divine Raiment of Yato no Kami that Yoruka wore—Spell Code.

Its special ability to control and manipulate the Drag-Ride of other people by touch activated from getting slashed. Yos Tork's Peluda was put under control—or it should be. But,

"Lost? What do you mean?"

".....!?"

\*Gaiin!\* A high pitched metallic sound appeared and armor buckshot was fired from Peluda once more.

Because Yoruka had just swing her katana shaped Blade, she didn't make it in time to repel all of the numerous projectiles. This time she blocked the attack with her barrier.

"So you removed the armor part that was touched before the control is stolen?"

Armor removal by using Break Purge once more.

However, originally if the armor was shot out many times, the parts would be insufficient and naturally even moving the armor would become impossible.

But, the appearance of the Peluda before her hadn't changed that much. It only shrunk somewhat from the original size but that was all.

Surmising from that, Yoruka understood that Peluda's characteristic was related to it.

"—Indeed. This is exactly the special armament of my Peluda,  
Dragon Feather Carapace  
Metal Jacket. And your Divine Drag-Ride is Yato no Kami isn't it? There is information of it in Avalon's database."

"What an argumentative puppet. The minor details don't matter. After all in the end it's simply that the stronger one will win."

"I agree. But, in that case the advantage lies with me."

\*GOU-!\*

Yoruka kicked on the air with Karafumi once more and rushed freely through the darkness of the night.

At the same time she unleashed multiple slashes with exquisite swordsmanship to attack Peluda.

On the other hand, Yos Tork also accurately blocked the attacks with her armor. Each time she would use Break Purge to skillfully escape from Spell Code's control.

Yoruka was a cut above in combat, but Yos Tork was also protected by the tough armor of Peluda. The offense and defense were unfolding with the advantage moving back and forth between the two sides.

(However, first I have to get away from here.)

Yoruka was still saving her trump cards like Over Limit using Spell Code on her own armor to release the limits or Instant Strike by using her mystic eye that was strengthened by Baptism, but right now wasn't the phase to go for the kill.

They were separated by a distance of several kl from the Sacred Eclipse, but if Raffi detected the battle here then she would be immediately thrown into disadvantage.

Therefore, first she focused on fighting Yos Tork while taking distance from Sacred Eclipse.

"You're quite something. You aren't as good as Blackend Kingdom's Seven Dragon Paladins—Singlen Shelbrit, even so you're really skilled."

Yos Tork was showing a composure where she could make a light talk while exchanging attacks.

In respond Yoruka also reacted to those words.

"That's a nostalgic name. I also had fought him. Though I lost at that time."

"Fought? With him? Fu....., regrettable. So you're only at the level that is inferior against that man. If you actually won against that man, then I would be able to indirectly achieve my revenge though."

"What do you mean by that?"

Yoruka jumped around using footing of empty air with Karafumi and guided Yos Tork toward an abandoned area that had no sign of people.

It was a block that was once trampled by the Ruin Gigas that was marched to the royal capital by the Lord. It was an empty plot of land that still had no prospect of getting redeveloped.

Yoruka intentionally responded to the conversation to distract the opponent's focus, took distance from the Sacred Eclipse, and skillfully brought the opponent to a territory where she could display her full strength.

"I have a debt to that man from Babel. I was once taken by surprise and got destroyed into pieces, but if I get serious then that guy wouldn't be my match. I would be happy if there is a chance to take revenge but——"

".....You wished to do that, with the skill of someone at your level?"

At the center of the area that was turned into ruins, there was a mountain of rubbles that was the former site of a remarkably large observation deck.

Yoruka who was standing in front of that smiled with the moon behind her.

But, Yos Tork too didn't get baited by Yoruka's provocation and simply looked up to it.

"Yeah. But it's understandable for you to think that. After all someone at your level must be unable to measure my strength. By the way——"

Yos Tork cut off the flow of the talk and looked around.

"Don't tell me that you intend to get closer to victory just by continuing to strip off my armor and nothing else?"

".....!?"

\*Crack\*

The next moment, the Blade that was being held by the armored arm of Yato no Kami got countless cracks entering it.

"This is.....?"

Yoruka tilted her head, then right after that Yos Tork's mechanical eyes shined and she moved.

She accelerated with the wheels extending from Peluda's armored legs and her hammer that was boosted by the weight of the Drag-Ride's frame roared.

The hammer was swung up until reaching the back and then it was swung down in an arc as though an axe swung to split up firewood.

Yos Tork pointed out to Yoruka that Yato no Kami's Blade was about to break was in order to dull Yoruka's judgment.

Whether she was going to defend or attack, if her main weapon was half damaged then a hesitation would be born in her choices.

Instantaneous judgment would decide the outcome in a battle of two sides that were evenly matched in ability. That hesitation would become a fatal opening.

The hammer of Peluda that came rushing and attacked couldn't be blocked by the barrier of Yato no Kami that was a special equipment type.

In addition because there was a wall of rubble behind YOruka, she was also unable to immediately leap backward in this situation. Yos Tork was aiming for this.

Yoruka inevitably could only to left or right. Yoruka made Yato no Kami leaped to the right—but,

"—Break Purge!"

".....!"

At the same time when Yoruka dodged the downward swing of the hammer, Peluda's armor shined and Break Purge was fired once more.

Until now it was only activated right after Yoruka slashed, but this time Peluda fired armor parts buckshot the moment Yoruka dodged.

Although she immediately strengthened the barrier, the Break Purge was an attack with physical attribute, so it couldn't be blocked completely. The armor that was hit by the buckshot creaked and the impact penetrated to Yoruka's slender body.

"Hou, you intentionally not defended with your Blade. It looks like you have a little intelligence."

"In the first place this is what you aimed for isn't it?"

Yos Tork looked proudly triumphant, in contrast Yoruka was smiling even while bleeding from her hands and legs.

Yos Tork's tactic was already working since the offense and defense just now that only looked like a simple restraining action.

The moment Yoruka slashed her with the Blade, Peluda would launch a counterattack using Break Purge.

The enemy's aim was to destroy Yato no Kami's Blade using that tremendous impact.

Even though Yos Tork could use Break Purge freely anytime, she intentionally limited her timing of use at the moment when she received an attack, and then she took Yoruka by surprise.

In a glance it could be thought as a clever scheme, but that rational and calculated tactic made even Yoruka feel impressed in her heart.

"You're unexpectedly quite skilled. I thought that the existence called Gear Leader was just a puppet that was placed in the Ruin."

"—You called me a puppet? This insolent fellow!"

Yos Tork raised her eyebrows hearing Yoruka casual muttering.

She drove Peluda forward once more in full speed toward Yato no Kami and swung her hammer horizontally.

Yoruka dodged by jumping up high so that she wouldn't have her back toward the rubbles.

But, she received a pursuing attack by Break Purge once more and got hit.

Her way to defend was limited so that her only weapon the katana wouldn't be destroyed.

Furthermore the buckshot came flying in a wide area, so it couldn't be fully evaded no matter what.

(This is bad..... To think that the characteristic of Yato no Kami will have an effect at this kind of situation.)



Because Yato no Kami was a Divine Drag-Ride of special type equipment that was the same like Drake, its endurance was greatly inferior compared to land battle type.

That aspect could be covered up in the battles until now using Yoruka's own skill, but to think that she would be in this much difficulty when she was against an opponent that could handle that.

It was a powerful enemy since Singlen who she fought before.

—No, considering the factor that the opponent was an Automata whose capability was unknown to her, it could be said that this enemy was even more formidable in a sense.

"The likes of you have no ground to treat us as puppet. You low life who can't even introduce your name!"

Yoruka seemed to have stepped on some kind of landmine because Yos Tork's attack was increasing in intensity.

Yoruka dodged Peluda's Break Purge that was fired consecutively as much as possible and stopped the harm to the minimum even while the damage was accumulating.

Peluda's armor was decreasing rapidly, it was getting a size smaller.

"—!?"

But, because the weight of armor that was covering the outer side had been considerably removed, the speed was rapidly increasing.

The attack that she should be able to barely avoid was steadily becoming impossible to dodge.

"—Break Purge!"

Even so she dodged the hammer attack in a hair's breadth, but in that instant armor parts buckshot in a scale that was several times greater compared to before burst out.

"Ku, u.....!"

That power pierced Yato no Kami's barrier and armor, causing Yoruka to raised a faint voice of anguish.

She was blown away for ten-odd ml from receiving the aftershock of the explosive impact.

"However don't tell me that you—are planning to trap me? You provoked me and made me to keep attacking recklessly, in order to make me under the impression that I'm the one with advantage. You also intentionally didn't defend using Howling Roar."

"—!?"

Yoruka didn't use the shockwave from Howling Roar to decrease the impact of the buckshot was certainly also because of such tactic.

But, Yoruka instantly understood that even that tactic had been within the enemy's expectation.

Because in front of Peluda that had fired all of its armor parts with Break Purge, a new armor was summoned as resupply.

Super Restoration

"—Life Gain. The second special armament of my Peluda is to summon the spare Metal Jacket. Your plan has failed, nameless Drag-Knight. No—errand girl of Azure Division."

It was Yoruka who was led into a trap.

Furthermore, the stamina of the Automata didn't look like it was decreasing at this time, perhaps because it was receiving energy from Avalon.

She also saw through that Yoruka was someone affiliated with Azure Division.

And above all else, even the greatest strength of Yato no Kami, Divine Raiment Spell Code that could control Drag-Ride was sealed in this battle.

If the situation was objectively evaluated, it was an unfavorable situation that could be said as hopeless.

"What a high and mighty talk, coming from a mere familiar of the Sacred Eclipse."

"It's only that brave front of yours that is really something. —But, you aren't a match against me."

Yos Tork declared without a single change of expression and made Peluda to slowly walk forward.

Yoruka's special armament <sup>Spider's</sup> <sup>String</sup> Kumo no Ito.

The super-fine steel line that couldn't be seen with human eye was laid out like a barrier while she was fighting. She aimed to activate Spell Code using that, but Yos Tork threw Dagger to sever the steel lines one by one.

Because she was an Automata who was able to browse the database to check all of Yato no Kami's equipment, spec, and ability that this feat was possible for her.

"We are the people who were entrusted by Arshalia-sama with the Ruins that exist for the sake of managing humans. We were formerly human. Respecting the will of us who became incurably sick due to a certain circumstance, Arshalia-sama placed our personality into mechanical body. Originally emotion is unnecessary for us. But we are equipped with conviction in order to overcome difficulty."

She was talking eloquently while making preparation for checkmating Yoruka.

Even while talking she wasn't relaxing her guard even slightly.

"We were entrusted with the wisdom and technology of the past and fought for many months and years for the sake of her wish until now. Everything is for the sake of the system to save this world and bring about peace! Don't lump me in the same group of vulgar bunch like you and Singlen!"

She threw a Dagger and cut apart the last barrier that was created with Kumo no Ito.

Yos Tork readied her hammer once more and glared at Yoruka.

"What a grand cause. And—has you finished putting up your own barrier?"

"What do you, mean?"

Yos Tork spontaneously asked back at Yoruka's words.

"The ability of your Divine Drag-Ride—a part of the armors you sent flying will function as detector to the surrounding correct? There won't be any problem as long as I understand that."

"......You bastard. Where did you learn that?"

Yos Tork questioned Yoruka with a dubious gaze.

It implied that Yoruka's words were right on the mark.

The Divine Raiment of Peluda that Yos Tork was wearing was

Water Current Flame Encampment

Red Marker . Using the detectors that were planted in the armor parts that were like the Drag-Ride's scales, it was possible to sense any existence at the surrounding.

"The answer is my special armament—Kumo no Ito. If you know about Yato no Kami's ability and specs, then you will need to fight while avoiding the steel line that can become the trigger for Spell Code. But, it's next to impossible to accurately detect the lines."

".....but, I am Automata as you can see. Do you think I won't be able to see something like that?"

"Then, why was your movement monotone at the beginning?"

Yoruka smiled with a chuckle while readying her katana shaped Blade.

"If you have the function to see through everything from the beginning, you also wouldn't have any reason to expressly avoid the location where I was at. Isn't that right?"

"—!?"

Above all else, the greatest reason was how Yoruka got detected so easily at the beginning even though she was hiding in camouflage.

If the number of Automata that could be moved at the same time was limited, then they should dispatch a Divine Drag-Ride user who excelled in detection ability.

By scattering Peluda's armors at the surrounding from the start, even Yoruka who was using camouflage could be located. That was her deduction.

"I thought you are just a mere assassin, but unexpectedly you have a working brain. Let me praise you, pawn of Azure Division."

"Oh my? So I am praised. Though it's not like I'm happy to hear that from anyone who isn't Aruji-sama."

Yoruka replied at Yos Tork's praise with a jesting tone.

"But, it's pitiful. I already learned your movement like the back of my hand. The barrier of string that you placed has also been destroyed. Your Divine Raiment won't work against this Peluda. You also don't have any fighting strength left that can decently match me. You're trying to resist but—there is nothing more that you can do."

Yos Tork pointed at Yoruka with the hammer she lifted and said so.

In respond Yoruka kept smiling without any chance and gazed at the Automata girl.

"It's you who are pitiful. No, I'm a bit sympathetic with you."

"What?"

Yoruka sighed slightly 'fuu' and closed her eyes.

She gazed at Yos Tork's expression with the asymmetrically colored eyes that she opened once more.

"I know that you all are indebted to someone, but then so what? Do you really believe that after seeing the sight before this? If that's actually the case—this grand cause of yours, it doesn't have any value then, not at the slightest."

Yos Tork was the same like Yoruka herself in the past.

The little brother that she swore to protect was already gone.

However, she fought as the Empire's Assassin Blade in order to at least protect that promise.

While knowing that doing so wouldn't even become self-satisfaction for herself, Yoruka who had no will of her own couldn't do anything other than that.

But, Lux saved her.

He destroyed the empire in order to save it, even though it ended in failure he chose the path as a criminal prince and continued fighting in order to guide the New Kingdom into a correct path.

The young man who Yoruka recognized as her new master didn't lose sight of his own conviction and justice even now when his dream was destroyed.

That was why—.

"Then, I'll teach you. That my loyalty to my master, is superior to your blind justice."

No matter how powerful Fugil was, no matter how powerful Sacred Eclipse was, she could face them.

Yoruka didn't know that there would be a self of her who could fight by her own will.

"What, are you planning? Do you think that you'll be able to overturn this disadvantage even knowing of my Peluda's Divine Raiment!?"

Yos Tork drove Peluda forward along with an angry yell.

She charged in a straight line toward Yoruka with full powered dash in a state that had recovered the scaly shaped multiple layered armors.

She lifted up the hammer in her hand and put all her strength into it.

"I can see your movement no matter where you try to escape, so I can intercept you with Break Purge! You have no chance to win!"

The instant she attempted to checkmate Yoruka once more with that sure kill attack pattern, the figure of Yoruka and Yato no Kami vanished from before her eyes.

".....-!?"

She was nowhere.

No, the armor of Peluda that was scattered at the surrounding—Divine Raiment Red Marker's detection ability told her Yoruka's location clearly.

It told Yos Tork that she was simply unable to follow Yoruka's movement because the enemy was too fast.

"You are, slower than I thought."

"What-, did you say-.....!?"

The charge was dodged with a leap and Yoruka circled to her back.

She kicked on the ground with the four legs of Yato no Kami, then almost at the same time she somersaulted and kicked on the empty air using Karafumi as ceiling replacement, and rolled once more before landing.

The abnormally difficult piloting technique and body movement made Yos Tork gazed in wonderment.

"—Break Purge!"

Yos Tork who reacted to Yoruka's voice responded with Break Purge that combined offense and defense into one.

A great amount of armor buckshot was scattered to her defenseless behind.

But, Yoruka dodged the buckshot with Howling Roar and landed a counter slash on Peluda's shoulder.

"—Spell Code"

"Gu, uuh! You bastard-!? How! How can, this kind of movement, in my database.....it doesn't exist!"

Right after the slash, shining strange letters formed on Peluda's whole body.

Yoruka looked at that while taking the stance of pulling her katana to behind her.

"It's simple."

When Yoruka put her hand on the Sword Device on her waist, Yato no Kami also traced the movement of its user and showed a sword drawing stance.

What she unleashed just now was evasion and then—a slash to the back using Quick Draw that Lux invented.



Spell Code was working here because she aimed at the moment after Yos Tork's Peluda activated Break Purge.

"Break Purge is also the same like Howling Roar—. It released the energy that is gathered in the Force Core. In other words, it cannot be fired consecutively. That's why, I let you fired first and aimed at that opening. That's all."

".....Guh!?"

Until just now Yoruka was one-sidedly defending against Yos Tork's fierce attack was in order to grasp this timing.

Yos Tork was cornering this girl until just now with a perfect tactic.

In fact, Yato no Kami's armor and weapon were half destroyed and it should be unable to display its full capability anymore.

(And yet—what's with this girl's real strength.....!)

To be more unshakable than machine while containing a will that was blazing hotter than human.

"U, AAAAAH!"

Yos tork also reached toward her own Sword Device and yelled to oppose the control of Spell Code.

Because the katana was only in contact for an instant, the usurpation of control using Divine Raiment was dispelled.

But, Yoruka didn't miss that instant that she was aiming for.

"—End Action"

\*GOU-!\* The jet black darkness that cut apart the wind danced at the girl who was clad in huge armor.

The Drag-Ride's body twisted and landed a sword stroke. The momentum wasn't killed and continued into a rotation that brought one more attack.

The impact of the slash, the recoil was utilized, mind control operation and body control operation were alternately repeated many times over.

The consecutive attacks struck Peluda's armor like a storm that surpassed the Drag-Ride's limit.

"Guh, guguh.....!"

The unceasing fierce attacks that were unleashed from every direction gave no time for Yos Tork to even activate the Break Purge.

(But, do you understand? If you attack like this with your damaged weapon—)

Due to Peluda's thick armor, Yoruka's katana shaped Blade was also being worn down in high speed.

"If I can just endure this then, it'll be, my win-.....!"

The endurance of Automata was slightly inferior than Drag-Ride, even so it was far tougher compared to flesh and blood human.

Therefore, she concentrated all the energy to the armor's surface and barrier and hardened her defense like turtle.

More than a hundred slashes were unleashed in just ten-odd seconds. Right after that, that chance arrived.

.

—\*Paki-, iIN!\*

.

".....-!?"

End Action's infinite attack paused and Yoruka slightly opened her mouth.

The weariness of the damaged Blade crossed the limit and the white blade was snapped from the hilt. It rotated at the dark space.

"—Nice, one. But, I withstood, it..... The last stroke of sword that you prepared, can't reach me no matter what."

"That, is not so sure until you actually test it."

\*Creak creak\*, Yato no Kami's armor and frame raised a high pitched creaking sound.

Yoruka's last aim was Recoil Burst that was used at the same time with Spell Code.

The attack from what was originally a rampaging state due to the orders from the mind control operation and body control operation running against each other realized a destructive power that was several times than normal in exchange of the destruction to oneself.

And then right now the scales of Peluda's multiple layered armors were stripped off due to End Action, exposing what was inside.

Yoruka planned to deal a large damage to make a temporary opening before launching the finishing blow, but her Blade snapped and it became impossible.

"Then just try it. Try using that technique. You who don't have weapon are already—defeated."

"....."

Yoruka looked at Peluda's armors that were scattered to the surrounding.

Crackling red electricity was running from one scale to another scale that numbered several thousands.

"The Divine Raiment Red Marker is not just for detector, it has the effect of resonance! It's an ability to create a barrier of destructive space mainly using electromagnetic wave..... The armor parts that you and I myself scattered are around you. You already have no way to escape. This is, the end....."

"I see, as expected from the trump card of the Lord. It's not an exaggeration that you are their last defense."

"Fuh..... You're also splendid. You are the first one to fight against me until this far when I'm in full power. Now, swing down that bladeless sword. With that everything will be——over."

"It's just one spot."

".....?"

Yos Tork who heard Yoruka's words felt misgiving and kept quiet.

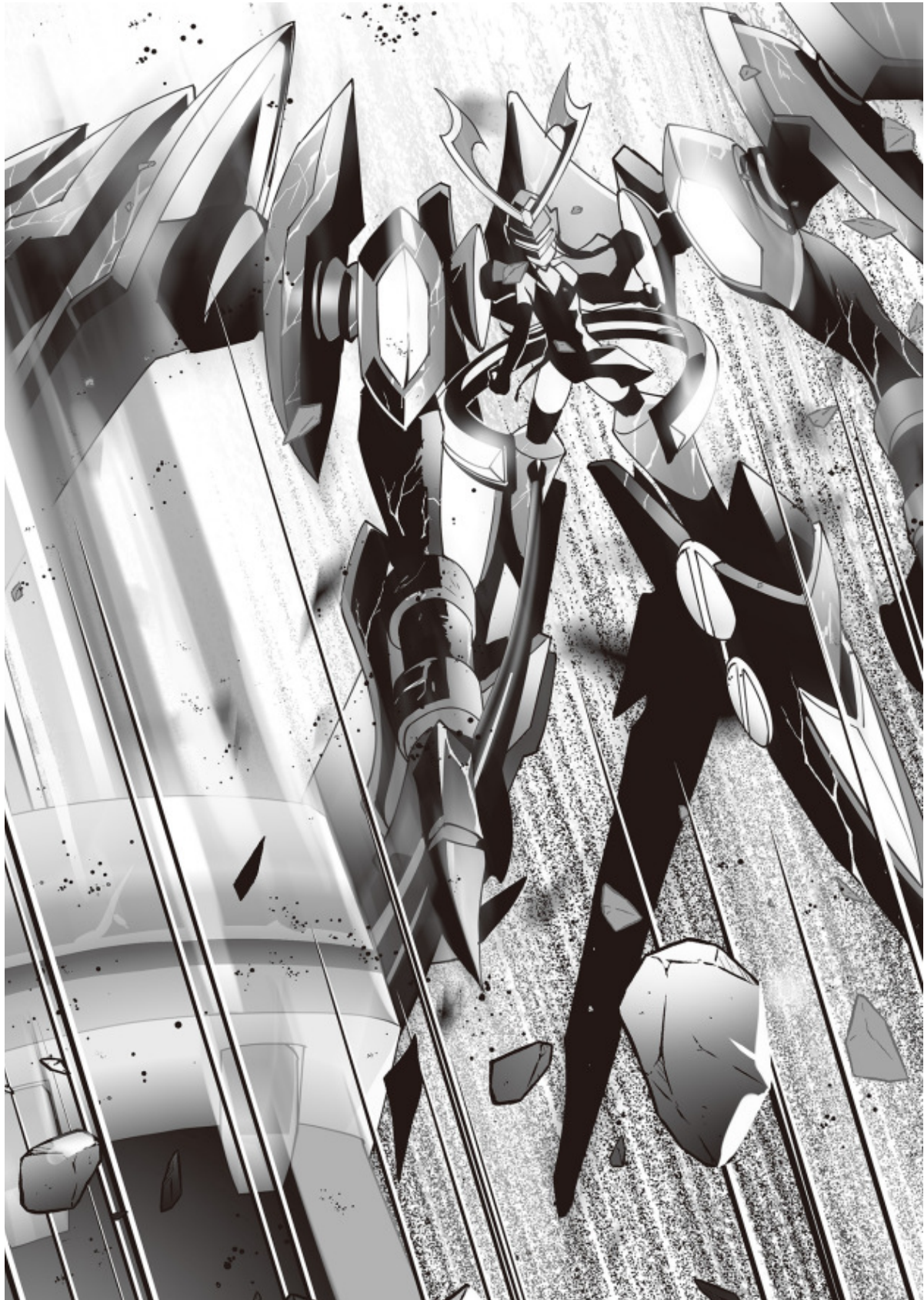
And then, she felt the armor of Peluda she was wearing was moving against her own will.

She noticed what was done to her.

"You bastard——"

With a toss, the hammer that Yos Tork was holding was thrown to the air.

The next moment, Yoruka who discarded the broken katana shaped Blade caught the handle of the tossed hammer, and immediately swung it down to Yos Tork..





—\*DO-, GOUuuNN!\*

.

—Recoil Burst.

The armor and frame of Peluda was smashed along with a thunderous roar that was like lightning. Fragments scatted all over in the air.

(I see, her last method is..... She dealt that consecutive attack in between, was for this.....)

Yos Tork herself got half of her body blown away. Even so she tightly grasped the Sword Device she pulled out.

Because the Blade of Yoruka's Yato no Kami was broken, it was necessary for her to take away the enemy's weapon to bring out enough destructive power.

In order to do that, while attacking with End Action, Yoruka entangled Peluda with the special armament Kumo no Ito, then after Peluda entered a state where Yos Tork couldn't use Break Purge that shaved off the armors, she controlled Peluda with Spell Code and ordered it to hand over the hammer to her.

Yos Tork thought that she had completely checkmated Yoruka.

But—it was wrong.

No matter how much she was cornered into a disadvantageous situation, she didn't slacken down to search for a way to overturn the table.

Yoruka too had grown.

Although she was defeated against Singlen who was a powerful enemy in a different manner, she threw herself into battle once more with new weapons called tactic and strategy to get closer to the territory of her master Lux.

"Splendid, did..... Let me praise, your battle scenario..... But!"

\*Crackle crackle\*, mechanical components were exposed from Yos Tork's half smashed torso while she was smiling.

"Even so, my victory, is unshakable..... You will, die, here....."

The armor fragments of Peluda that were scattered around were leaking out sparks.

She resonated her remaining power with the intention of hitting Yoruka with the barrier of electricity from Divine Raiment Red Marker.

On the other hand Yoruka had also just made her Drag-Ride to rampage to use Recoil Burst. She couldn't move.

In other words, it was decided that she would be hit by the counterattack when she was unable to completely destroy Peluda.

"Haaah, haaah.....!"

Even Yoruka couldn't catch her breath after drastically consuming her stamina. She couldn't even talk properly.

But her expression was showing a satisfied smile.

"What's, wrong? If you want to say something say it, there is only several seconds, remaining you know?"

"Is.....that so? Then, just one sentence——"

Yoruka told Yos Tork while breathing roughly.

"Avalon is at the direction at the other side of this line of abandoned buildings isn't it? It saved me the trouble, that you taught it to me."

Yos Tork was hiding this much strength and protected a wide area using the containment zone of Red Marker was the proof of the defensive zone that was laid out in order to hide Avalon——.



And then, Yoruka noticed how she was attacking her to guide her away so that she wouldn't get closer at all to that direction.

".....You're, really something."

"Yes, you too. But—it's only the caliber of our master that is different."

".....I, haven't seen her for more than a thousand years now. Arshalia-sama, if you, are still alive——"

Right after that, fierce electricity surged from around Yoruka and Yos Tork.

It instantly made great fire to rise up in the whole area of the abandoned buildings.

Thus, the battle in this place closed its curtain.

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## Part 5

(.....Yoruka, stay safe.)

At the high class inn that was reserved for Lux and Syvalles members.

Yesterday, Lux who was told that Lisha was kidnapped was given suggestion from Airi and others if he could cooperate with the mission to take her back.

Of course Lux right now at the surface was unable to fight, so till the end he would only get involved by participating in Syvalles's meeting and lent them his knowledge.

Even so, there was no option of refusing, so he told them his intention to participate.

And then, today.

The morning of the fifth day after Azure Division made their war proclamation.

If he was following the original plan, a letter of challenge for a decisive battle would be sent to Raffi within today using Lisha as bait, but the problem was the place to do it.

It was necessary to infiltrate into Avalon and weakened its function, and searched for the secret of Sacred Elcipse and the weak point of Uroboros.

In order to do that, he had to locate the position of Avalon that was moved to the New Kingdom and designated that place as the battlefield.

However, even after two nights had passed since he last saw Yoruka, she hadn't contacted him yet.

He had faith at her strength, but it would be a different story if she fought Raffi who fused with Sacred Eclipse or Fugil at the worst case.

Last night he almost couldn't sleep at all worrying about Yoruka's safety.

Afternoon, the members of Syvalles were all present in the inn's dining hall that was used as meeting room.

It seemed Krulcifer and Celis headed to the castle from early in the morning and they were entrusted with a message from Queen Raffi.

But, it seemed there was a secret business and Krulcifer didn't come back.

Normally Lisha should be the one to stand in the position as the speaker, but today the captain Celis held that position.

"Nii-san. I understand that you are worried for Lisha-sama but, it's no good if you don't rest properly you know?"

His little sister Airi worried about him right after the meeting started.

Lux smiled wryly while pretending to not know anything about the battle behind the scene and the truth of the queen and took part in the strategy meeting to save Lisha.

"Then, first let's confirm the information of the present situation. Just as we were told yesterday, Lizsharte was kidnapped by Azure Division, but their hideout still hasn't been discovered. However, I believe that her safety is most likely assured."

Celis who was selected to manage the meeting presented the topic like that.

For Lux, he completely knew about that seeing that he was the one who kidnapped Lisha and entrusted her to Aeril and Magialca.

Rather he was feeling relieved inside his heart that Lisha's location still hadn't been discovered.

"Celis-senpai. Can I ask the reason for that?"

Airi raised her hand with a calm expression. Celis immediately told her the answer.

"The reason is because of Azure Division's objective. They are proclaiming to take back the royal authority from the New Kingdom by means of justifiable reason. If they are only going to attack, then there'll be no need to send notification letter to every place in the capital and spread the news to the people. Therefore——"

"There is something they have to do using Princess Lisha. Or perhaps they will make demand toward the New Kingdom. She won't be harmed until that negotiation is carried out then?"

Sharis added with a serious expression that was completely different from last night.

"Kidnapping isn't justifiable method or anything though."

Tillfur's light talk had no sharpness in it must be because she was worrying about Lisha.

Of course, Lisha was safe was nothing more than their assumption, so their anxiety wasn't completely wiped out.

But, the feeling to convince themselves somehow in this stalemate situation right now where they couldn't act carelessly was conveyed from the girls' words.

"Yes. Then, at present we can only wait for negotiation from Azure Division, and this meeting is just a simple exchange of information——can I take it to mean that?"

"No, that's not all."

Celis shook her head at Noct's question and responded with a serious face.

"The New Kingdom army captured a male Drag-Knight who is thought to be a member of Azure Division and got the information of their hideout

from him. The plan is to directly attack it within today."

"—!?"

Everyone's expression changed hearing that.

"The plan is for me to go along with one more person accompanying me.....Philuffy, if you are feeling well, can I ask you to come along?"

"I'm fine."

Philuffy who was vacantly listening to the meeting until now nodded at Celis's question.

"....."

Lux didn't show his agitation at all but, he received a shock inside his heart.

(A Drag-Knight of Kilzrake family was captured and confessed? Is that true?)

Supposing that Queen Raffi suspected Lux as the ringleader of Azure Division and brought up the subject in this place to shake him up, it would be strange if that information was also told to Syvalles.

In that case, perhaps the capture of Azure Division member itself was true.

"Also, it seems that soon Queen Raffi intend to personally announce the total war with Azure Division. It has been brought to light that Prime Minister Nulph and the senior consuls along with their relatives and a lot of related people were murdered by them."

A tense atmosphere filled the dining room once more. Everyone shut their mouth.

"That's, something that cannot be overlooked. It's not just about the princess. We have to do something too."

Sharis said that with a heavy tone from her sense of responsibility as the daughter of the army's vice commander.

(Azure Division killed Prime Minister Nulph.....!? So she came like that just as expected. ....But, something is strange.)

Lux knew about the fact that the members of Old Empire Faction that was opposing the New Kingdom were murdered at the third loop of the parade.

And then previously because the world revision of Uroboros was interrupted, Raffi and her group became unable to rewrite the perception of people anymore.

That was why he could understand the logic of blaming the crime to Azure Division in the surface but—.

(As expected, massacring the relatives and related people is too big in scale.)

Just because Raffi wanted to stabilize the government of New Kingdom, there was no need to also kill the relatives.

If she oppressed one side too one-sidedly, then she would provoke antipathy from other faction and group too.

Even though she had fused with Sacred Eclipse, if it was Queen Raffi who was involved in the government, there was no way she wouldn't be able to understand the inner workings of that level but—.

(As I thought, there is a secret to Sacred Eclipse.....)

There was no way someone would only obtain almighty power from getting possessed.

The reason why Listelka called Sacred Eclipse the cause of world destruction lied there.

"Tomorrow I ask the Triad to guard Lux-kun like usual. Also about Yoruka-san, does anyone know where she is?"

When Celis asked that, everyone's gaze gathered on Lux.

Yoruka was enrolled into the Academy with Relie's influence, but she was fundamentally moving based on Lux's order, so it couldn't be helped for them to look at him.

"......Right. I tried asking her for a bit if she can obtain some kind of clue to save Lisha-sama but——"

He didn't say any lie.

After all Lux was taking action, all was for the sake of saving Lisha and tore away Sacred Eclipse from Raffi in the end.

"I believe that Yoruka-san will be fine because it's her but, I'm a bit worried....."

Airi said that despondently. And then there was no more topic to be talked there and they broke up.

When Lux returned to his room in the inn, Syvalles member entered his room once more under the pretext of guarding him.

"And so Lux-chi, today I and Noct will be your caretaker. Just rely on us without reservation!"

"Yes. Please treat me well. As for somewhat indecent request.....it will depend on the degree of the request but, I'll secretly undertake it."

"No, you don't need to accept anything like that! Just what do you think I'm going to do!?"

Even though they only had that serious talk just now, this already happened several minutes after that.

Well, they must be acting considerate to Lux in their own way to unravel his anxiety at the surface.

"Is it really alright? For us to not do anything"

".....Of course."

Noct sat down beside the sofa and tilted her head while giving him an upward gaze.

A slight blush tinged the cheeks of her face that was always composed. That gesture made his heart jumped and his pulse unconsciously quickened.

"Aaa, you took five seconds before answering! We need to report this to Airi-chan later isn't it"

"Yes. Well, Airi right now is busy with practicing though. ....Oops, please pretend that you don't hear anything just now. In return I will also keep Lux-san's reaction just now a secret."

".....?"

Lux felt suspicious hearing the suggestive words from Noct.

Airi who wasn't a Drag-Knight had nothing to do in this situation.

At best it would only be sorting information and making record for Syvalles. Perhaps she was doing something like devising up a plan for the mission but, would it be something that she would need to leave her seat for?

He wouldn't find the answer even if he thought about it, and right now wasn't the time for that.

Now that a member of Azure Division had been captured, and the hideout of Lux and Magialca were found out in the worst case, that would be the end for them.

Therefore, Lux had to make a move immediately but—.



Most likely Queen Raffi was on guard against him. She must be observing him even now, watching how he would react.

(Captain Magialca, please take care of the rest. —Yoruka, please be safe.)

Lux closed his eyes in prayer and wracked his brain while looking for opening from the Triad. He talked with them while waiting for Aeryl to come.

Without even knowing, that secret conversation was overheard by a certain girl who was accidentally wearing a Drake in camouflage—.

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## Part 6

"U, uu....."

On the other hand around that time, Lisha opened her eyes inside an unknown room.

He was kidnapped by a black Drag-Knight who introduced himself as Azure Division—she couldn't sleep for a whole day after that because of tension, but it seemed before she realized it she had fallen asleep.

When she opened her eyes, she was told it was at the noon two days after she was captured.

She was locked in a room where there wasn't a single window. She guessed from that apparently she was in the basement of a private house.

It seemed to be a storehouse to preserve dried meat or wine that was remodeled. It was faint, but the scent of food was remaining. She was laid down on the room's bed.

Of course her hands were shackled. Her legs were also connected with chain.

She had no Sword Device and she was still wearing her pilot suit.

"Good morning Princess Lisha. How are you feeling?"

An androgynous girl with an unfamiliar face.

Just like how she once showed her own existence as a fictional character called Coral, Aeryl used the perception manipulation from the power of Baptism to make Lisha think of her as someone unknown. She talked to Lisha.

".....The comfort of this bed is the worst. I saw a dream of the past."

She didn't mention the content of her dream, but it was a dream when Lisha was captured as hostage against her father by the Old Empire.

Depending on the way of thinking, the situation right now could be said to be similar.

If she quickly killed herself....., such thought crossed her mind but—.

She couldn't lightly choose death with a reason that was different from that time.

"You seems to be alright if you can say that. Tell me if there is something that you want. I'll prepare it as much as I can."

"Then, can you bring me my Sword Device?"

"It's fine. We are storing them properly, so we'll return after the negotiation is over."

"....."

Lisha too thought that they wouldn't do as she asked, but she was harboring doubt toward that polite reaction.

Why this kind of people was planning a coup d'etat? She wondered.

"Just what are you guys planning to demand? Is it the legacy and technology of Avalon? The New Kingdom still hasn't obtained anything like that you know? Just what did you tell Alma, that girl to instigate her?"

".....It'll be fine. That girl will surely stand back on her feet. She won't become like Hayes."

Aeril muttered as though talking to herself toward that question.

Lisha had become unable to recognize her as Aeril, so Lisha didn't understand what she meant by saying that though.

"—Hayes? Just what are you saying?"

Aeril didn't reply and only smiled, then she exited the basement and moved to the first floor of the building.

Hayes who hated the clan of traitor was burned by the resentment and grudge of the past and she was driven by revenge, but Alma was already saved by the Black Hero.

That was why, Aeril was convinced that it would be alright.

By fighting together with Lux she touched his way of living and changed.

Just like Aeril herself in the past.

(Right now the strategy is working just like Lux-kun is aiming. What's left is only the method to defeat Sacred Eclipse and Uroboros.....)

There was no problem with the plan to defeat Fugil and Queen Raffi and returned the New Kingdom to the hand of human.

But, the hideout of Avalon that was moved from abandoned capital Guernica to the New Kingdom was still unknown.

There were several prospective candidates, but the Drag-Knight of Kilzrake family and Yoruka didn't return.

(If it's not found until tomorrow, we can only give up on Avalon. In that case——)

They could only directly confront Raffi and Fugil with Lisha as hostage.

Hiding further than that would be next impossible even for Aeril and co.

Even now the soldiers of New Kingdom or Automata might locate this hideout anytime.

.

\*Knock knock\*.

.

"——"

Suddenly the door of the house's first floor was knocked.

Aeril locked the entrance to the basement where Lisha was at and faced the entrance while holding her breath.

"It's me, open it."

She heard Magialca's voice. After Aeril showed her in, she let out a sigh of relieve.

She was disguising herself as an old woman and went outside using a cane.

Even so, although she was only walking by foot for several minutes to here, just doing that was accompanied with great danger.

"Fuu. I was moving here without getting discovered somehow, but it really took effort....."

Magialca's trusted retainer, Lolotte acted as the relay for information transfer and moved Lux, Magialca, Aeril, and then the subordinate Drag-Knights, but the previous hideout was already discovered and destroyed.

One of their subordinates was captured by Raffi and he told the hideout's location, but at that time the old hideout had been abandoned and the current hideout wasn't told to anyone except very few people.

However, no matter how vast the royal capital was, there was no way they could prepare several hideouts with location that conveniently wasn't known by anyone.

If they got careless and detected by the radar of New Kingdom's Drake, there was the danger that even the location of this place would be found out.

Although, Raffi's camp should also be lacking Drag-Knight personnel right now, so that possibility was low.

"And, how is it going? The situation——"

"About Kirihime Yoruka's unknown whereabouts, most likely she got into a battle with Automata. There was sign of battle at the abandoned buildings in the northeast district of the capital. It seemed that she was able to destroy one Automata but, perhaps they struck each other down, or perhaps——"

"....."

Magialca sat down heavily on a chair and sighed.

Even Aeril could guess without hearing the rest.

"Also, about that matter——. Did you contact the remaining Seven Dragon Paladins?"

"Yes. Just in case I tried contacting them one by one but, the binding on their mind isn't removed. There is possibility if I, you, or Lux go to them personally but, the prospect is slim I think. Just in case, I made a slightly forceful plan but....."

The battle strength necessary to defeat Fugil was still lacking.

With Syvalles of New Kingdom allying themselves with Raffi, their side also wanted to pull the surviving members of Seven Dragon Paladins to their side but, due to the world revision they were captured by the perception that the battle at Avalon had ended.

Because of that, they had no reason to fight this time.

It would be a different story if there was an objective of saving the world, at present this battle was nothing more than a civil war in the New Kingdom at the surface.

Even if they—the kings they served knew about the truth, it was unthinkable that they would decide to throw their precious battle force into this fight.

"If Yoruka doesn't come back, it means all the doors are closed for us. At that time we can only quietly run away taking the Grand Force with us."

"That's right, isn't it....."

Aeril commented back while knowing that such thing was impossible.

She knew that each Automata was equipped with the function to pinpoint the location of Grand Force in general, and she had also told that to Magialca.

Right now the Automatas were unable to take any big action because their energy was still lacking, but if the enemy combed the inside of the capital, then even with the city's size they would be discovered sooner or later.

In other words, they could only pray.

That Yoruka who Lux believed in, would cut open a path for them.

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## Part 7

".....Looks like, I slightly lost consciousness."

At noon after a day passed since the battle with Yos Tork, Yoruka opened her eyes inside a forest.

She lifted her face to look up at the trees that were growing thickly, and started to walk slowly.

Although she barely dodged that last explosion, the damage on her was great and it was the best she could do to hide.

After resting her body for half a day, she moved in order to investigate, but in the end she didn't find the hiding place of Avalon that was moved to the New Kingdom.

And finally she lost consciousness due to fatigue.

But, with her inherent instinct and searching the direction that Yos Tork didn't allow her to approach, she already hit a success.

Yoruka who wasn't born in this country had no way of knowing but, this place was called the ancient forest.

It was located northeast of the New Kingdom's castle. It was a land that was out of place from the capital.

Originally it was a sacred ground that was used for ceremony by the imperial family of Arcadia Empire. After the era of Old Empire passed, that place was abandoned and no one approached it anymore.

But, the ruins of broken temple were scattered here and there. There wasn't really any sign of beast here and the place was quiet.

The faint sound of flowing mountain stream.



The sound of rustling thriving plants from wind.

It felt like the nature was reflecting Yoruka's heart like a mirror.

In her mind was her master Lux.

Until now she thought that she didn't fear death and dying for the sake of her master was her cherished desire.

However, Lux said that she didn't think of Yoruka as tool.

(I'm sorry to put this burden on you. If it looks like it's impossible then I want you to not do anything rash and take Airi away to escape. And then, I want you to continue living protecting her.)

He said that to Yoruka.

"Aruji-sama too, is a cruel person....."

If she was relied on with that kind of painful expression, then it would make her wanted to accomplish that mission at any cost, even if she had to risk her life.

Why was so many people gathered around Lux?

Why did they want to give their all for his sake?

She was finally able to understand that.

However, Yoruka didn't feel that she was able to become human with that.

Rather instead of that kind of logic, her instinctual feeling of desiring Lux was getting stronger.

"Aruji-sama.....I love you dearly."

She already didn't have the strength left to wear Drag-Ride, but she continued walking in her flesh body while erasing her presence, and she

finally found out that place.

"....."

The silver haired girl called Arshalia was standing under a conspicuously large tree where a temple made from stone that looked like it almost crumbled was buried.

At the shadow of the tree that was only around a hundred ml ahead, there was a figure clad in silver pilot suit.

With this, the location of Avalon in general was pinpointed.

What was left was only to return to Lux without anyone noticing and told this news.

"This is, strange. Even though, I shouldn't even feel the pain of wound....."

The instant Yoruka's consciousness was receding once more—she saw the figure of Lux in front of her.

Right after that, she lost consciousness while leaning on a nearby rock.

Her body that was continuing her search without sleep or rest since the deathly battle the other day reached its limit.

Footsteps were slowly approaching the wounded Yoruka.

".....Is this alright, Fugil? For the current master.....Queen Raffi to not be told."

Fugil who lifted up the fainted Yoruka slowly went toward the Automata Arshalia.

But, his expression contained no hostility toward the girl.

Fugil was staring at the unconscious Yoruka with a straight face.

"Our contract doesn't reach that far. My work this time is mostly over. Sacred Eclipse already chose Raffi and she obtained the ultimate power. I will only continue to observe until the next battle, when somehow who is qualified to obtain Avalon appear once again and fight."

Fugil sent a glance at Arshalia. The Automata guessed his intention and transferred herself to the central of Avalon for a moment.

She took out a simple healing device and applied it to Yoruka.

"My objective is to guide human, not to one-sidedly support one of the sides. If she is found out by Raffi in this place then that's as far as her fate goes but, that's not what happened. Besides, at this juncture it's far too advantageous for her majesty."

"That's also true. Then, won't it be fine if you become the ally of Lux and others?"

The Automata Arshalia tilted her head expressionlessly.

Fugil quietly casted down his eyes and answered that question.

"At present the two sides are equal in strength. Therefore there is no place for me to interfere. I will only see it through. What kind of conclusion this battle will produce."

"Can I ask one thing?"

"What?"

The Automata Arshalia indifferently treated Yoruka while asking Fugil.

"Is it okay to consider that your ally is us the Automatas?"

".....No. I'll have you all cooperate with me when I use Uroboros but, there is no position called ally for me. That is the destiny of me the Hero of Beginning."

Fugil muttered without any change in his expression.

Arshalia didn't say anything more and time passed.

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## Part 8

"In the end Lux didn't show any movement. I thought that he would be considerably threatened with the capture of his Azure Division subordinate. Did he give up, or being careful, which one could it be?"

The castle of royal capital Lordgalia. The morning of the seventh day since the third world revision ended in failure.

Queen Raffi was leaning on her elbow on the throne in the audience hall.

At her sides were only Fugil and Automata Arhslia, there was nobody else.

The appearance of Azure Division and their war proclamation.

In addition with the assassination of Prime Minister Nulph and the murder of a great number of consuls coming into light, the chief vassals were pressed to deal with the fallout.

Especially if the fact that Aeryl who was the key of Avalon and Grand Force were stolen became known by the other countries, they would demand the New Kingdom to take responsibility and it might cause chaos.

In addition due to the scar from the long war, even the preservation of battle force consisting of Drag-Knight wasn't going well that they were asking for cooperation from the four great nobles once more.

By the way, the location of hideout that was confessed from the young man who was a member of Azure Division captured the other day was deserted. The investigation using the remaining documents and so on was in progress, but everything ended in vain.

"Lisha..... It's good that she is safe but, now we have run out of any clue. We have no other choice but to wait for the enemy to make their approach. Or perhaps—I should take action from my side."

If possible she didn't want to tell the people about Lisha's kidnapping even if after this they recovered Grand Force and carried out world revision.

Therefore, Raffi's side could only use the only card they had caught, which was Alma.

If the public execution of Azure Division's leader was announced, the other side would have to make an action. Or perhaps—.

When she was thinking such thing, a soldier's voice came from outside the hall.

".....Begging permission to have an audience with her majesty queen Raffi. There is a messenger from Azure Division sending a letter of challenge!"

"Enter. Over here."

Raffi told Fugil and Arshalia to withdraw before telling that. Then a Drag-Knight soldier who was still young rushed in.

And then he conveyed a new demand from Azure Division.

Which was, a proposal for a decisive battle that put both sides' hostages and Grand Force on the line.

The stage that was decided by Azure Division for it was the ancient forest—the new hiding place of Avalon that was transported from Guernica in the span of two weeks.

"So it was discovered in this situation..... The enemy is also really something."

After telling the soldier who came with the message, Raffi smiled toward Fugil and Arshalia.

"Or perhaps, this is because of a guidance from someone, seeing that I am in too much of advantage?"

Raffi glanced at Fugil beside him with a meaningful tone.

But, the man with eye glint that was like a beast didn't make a single change of expression.

"Well, either way, it seems I have no choice but to accept. I can only do that in order to take back my daughter Lisha. Of course I will bring the members of Syvalles to participate. Everyone has also finished going through the strengthening, and the way to use them skillfully has also been settled."

The corner of Raffi's mouth slightly rose while saying that.

The Azure Division was using their time to lay down various groundworks, while on the other hand Raffi was also steadily making preparation in order for the war.

During these several days, she was observing Lux in detail, but it was like he didn't let Raffi to catch his tail at all.

There wasn't any sign of him slipping out of the inn, even when he was fighting Lisha and Krulcifer he was thought as a different person.

But, Raffi's belief that Lux was the ringleader of Azure Division hadn't changed.

Right now there was no one who could declare war to the New Kingdom except Lux who was once guided by Fugil to destroy the Old Empire.

Thinking so she was forming countermeasure in these several days.

"It will be nice if Lux come."

"....."

Fugil who heard Raffi's words stayed quiet and only stood beside her.

The next day, the curtain of a direct confrontation that would shake the New Kingdom was raised.

# **Chapter 4 – The Ancient Forest**



## Part 1

"Your majesty! The request for cooperation to the four great nobles is finished. Please give us the instructions for the battle formation."

The early morning of the eighth days since Azure Division announced their existence for the first time.

The time for the all-out confrontation finally came.

Lisha and Alma, the key character for each camp that became hostage, as well as the Grand Force and Aeril would be put on the line in this battle.

The battle would be held at the Ancient Forest located at northeast of the capital Lordgalia.

Originally, the commanding of New Kingdom's army wasn't Raffi's field.

But, since the death of Prime Minister Nulph who was serving concurrently as the army's commander, there wasn't even any time to decide the successor so Raffi volunteered for the position.

"I see. Then, please ask them to guard the surrounding. Please don't think of anything like sending reinforcement from the capital no matter what. We will take care of it at our side."

"Ho, however, no matter how much advantage we hold, won't the battle strength be lacking with only the military cadet unit? At the very least we of the New Kingdom military should also participate——"

"No. There is no need. Our strategy has been decided."

Raffi's eyes shined at the same time when she muttered that once more.

Then the will vanished from the soldier's expression and he nodded slightly before going out.

"This is troubling. After experiencing the convenience like Endless once, the process of convincing people feels like a great chore now. I only understand for the first time the usefulness of Prime Minister Nulph who was assisting me only after he is gone."

"....."

From the beginning Raffi had no intention of relying on the regular army and the four great nobles to be her main force.

Chaos would be created when she invested the Automatons into battle with them there, and in the first place against Azure Division that had powerful fighter in the level of Lux, there would be no use to dispatch the average Drag-Knight to be their opponent.

Although, the kingdom's army also had their honor to keep, so she also couldn't slight them which was a source of worry for her.

No, above all else, to make Raffi's plan a reality, subordinates of common soldiers would only become a hindrance.

Currently no one knew about that arbitrary decision of Raffi.

Whether it was Lux, or even the Automata Arshalia and Fugil.

The Ancient Forest in the first place wasn't just a terrain that was hard to enter by people, it had the structure similar to a natural labyrinth after being left alone for several hundred years.

Raffi and others of New Kingdom army would take position in that battlefield earlier and laid in wait for Lux's group.

First both sides would meet at a landmark that was the lake at the center. One side would be at the north while the other at the south. After confirming that the hostages and Grand Force were present, the battle would begin. The one who took down the commander other than Lisha and Alma would win.

Or rather, by that point victory would substantially fall on the lap of that side.

She also used Avalon's function and placed Abysses there, but the members of Syvalles weren't told about that.

Till the end she planned to use it as last resort as ambush.

"Fugil. If that person.....the black Drag-Knight is actually really Lux—do you think he is able to go as far as locating the entrance of Avalon that was transported here?"

"Who knows, I cannot make that judgment."

Fugil answered curtly. Arshalia also nodded in agreement.

"However, a truly excellent statesman will also plan for any eventuality."

"Then, can I ask you to protect the central? If their aim from designing this place as the stage of the decisive battle is Avalon—that will be the best right? Even if you don't have any duty to protect me, but if it's that"

"Fu....."

Fugil realized Raffi's scheme from that conversation and let slipped a smile.

(I thought she is just a ruler who is simply relying on Sacred Eclipse's strength, but she is quite proficient in her cunning.)

Or perhaps, it was the growth because of her decision to fight by her own will?

Fugil fundamentally wouldn't participate in this battle.

He followed the guidance of Sacred Eclipse and became the ally of Raffi who was at the bottom of misfortune and carried out the world revision. But that period had already passed.

But, if the enemy aimed at Fugil himself—or perhaps at Avalon itself then it would be a different story.

Fugil had the duty to protect Avalon's system.

And then if the enemy was Lux, there was a possibility that he would not aim at Raffi herself, but attempted to stop the function of Avalon in order to oppose Sacred Eclipse and Uroboros.

She placed Fugil there with the aim to stop Lux's objective.

"You're right. Either way, at present when the Grand Force of Garden is removed, large scale function cannot be used but..... If the Lord, Aerial is joining hand with Azure Division, then they will be able to use several of the functions."

The Automata Arshalia said that in agreement. She stood at Raffi's side and readied herself to take command of the remaining Automatas.

After that the problem was how Raffi would command and place the Drag-Knights of the four great nobles that were lent to her.

With this—all the preparations were finished.

"Then, let's go Fugil. And then please ascertain it. I and him.....which one of us is worthier to rule the New Kingdom. Which one is the loser who should be destroyed——"

After that, the restrained Alma was taken from the dungeon and they went outside the castle.

They were carried by Arshalia who was wearing EX Wyvern and Raffi along with Fugil and others flew toward the Ancient Forest.

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## Part 2

Around that time when Raffi's group was starting to move to take position in the Ancient Forest—.

The preparation for the last battle was also being carried out at the high class where Lux and others were staying at.

Yoruka was—got in touch with Magialca yesterday and told that Avalon was hidden in the Ancient Forest.

Based on that information, they were able to designate the location for the war to Queen Raffi.

Yoruka herself was wounded and fatigued so she wouldn't be able to move for a while, but the strength of Automata that was able to fight equally against a Drag-Knight at Yoruka's level was also a threat.

And then of course, it was the same with the girls who were in front of him right now.

"Then Lux, please wait for the good news. We will surely take Lisha back."

The members of Syvalles in their pilot suit with sword belt attached on their body came to Lux to say farewell before their departure.

"I'm counting on you. Celis-senpai, everyone....."

Lux was showing a disappointed expression while grasping Celis's hand. The other members who would be heading to the decisive battle against Azure Division were Krulcifer, Philuffy, and the Triad.

Until now they were acting as Lux's observer and guard, but as expected all of them had to participate in order to rescue Lisha.

He felt dubious because he didn't see Krulcifer the day before yesterday and Celis yesterday, but they didn't tell him the reason of their absent.

But, it was good that he was able to see their face like this at the end.

He was unable to answer their feeling but, Lux too also realized his feeling once more, that he loved these girls.

(Everyone being absent for one day each is bothering me but—. There is nothing that I can do about that, I guess.....)

It was already fruitful just from knowing that everyone was heading to the Ancient Forest for the decisive battle under Queen Raffi's command.

Several hours after this, the negotiation between the commanders of each side would begin and then it would move into war.

Lux would have to face almost the whole force of the enemy by his lonesome.

"This is that girl we're talking about, so surely she will be frustrated from being unable to meet with Lux-kun."

Krulcifer and Philuffy talked to him one by one, then the Triad came last.

"Honestly, it feels disheartening that you won't be there but, we have to show our cool side too sometimes."

Sharis smiled with an expression that gave no hint about their conversation the other day.

"Without Lisha-sama, the maintenance of Drag-Ride is completely no good. We've to get her back here."

"Yes. Lux-san also doesn't look energetic. We will bring back Lisha-sama quickly."

Tillfur and Noct told him that with deliberately bright attitude.

"Yes. Thank you....."

Even Lux didn't understand why he said thank you.

But, a moment later he noticed a certain fact and his expression slightly clouded.

(No..... I see, I have to say it here.)

If he was defeated in this battle, Lux would be unable to meet them anymore.

Perhaps even if he succeeded, if Lux's identity as the leader of Azure Division became spread within the country, he wouldn't have a place anymore in this country.

That was why, he had to say it right now.

"—Everyone, thank you for accepting and treating me well until now even with my criminal status. I really had fun spending time with everyone in the Academy."

The Academy life that began since his meeting with Lisha, it was a happy one from being able to spend it together with them.

When Lux said that with his whole feeling, the girls were making a bewildered and embarrassed face.

But, they immediately smiled and poked at him, embraced him, or messed up his hair.

"What a modest junior. It's us who are greatly in your debt. Everyone here was saved by you."

"Indeed. It's like you don't have any self-awareness of what you have accomplished."

Celis and Krulcifer smiled in exasperation.

"It will make me embarrassed which is unlike me if you told us your gratitude straight in the face like that so cut it out. Aah geez, I can't act coolly like this."

"Nn, me too. No, I know that this is me being excessively self-conscious though."

"Yes. Even so, I'm happy to hear it."







Sharis, Tillfur, and Noct of the Triad each showed their reaction in delight.

At the end Philuffy tightly grabbed Lux's hands with the usual her own pace.

"Lu-chan. Then, we're going now."

".....Be careful."

After finishing the farewell with the girls, Lux returned to his room.

Airi was accompanying Lux who was pretending that he was unable to walk well.

"Somehow, this feels nostalgic. That we're alone like this. The surrounding become slightly too noisy since Nii-san came to the Academy."

"That, might be true."

Lux who was lying down on the bed nodded and closed his eyes to pretend to sleep.

"Please don't worry. I will—protect Nii-san."

Airi watched over Lux for a while, then she went outside and closed the door.

She was going to meet up with Syvalles who was departing late.

"....."

After this Lux had to slip out of the inn without anyone noticing and headed to the Ancient Forest.

Several minutes later, using a certain method Lux hurried to the meeting place with Magialca without getting noticed by Relie who was inside the inn and the soldiers who were disguised as citizens.



## Part 3

"Hmph..... Good grief. Queen Raffi is quite troublesome. It might be reasonable if it's against big shot like the Lord, but in a battle against green bandits like Azure Division—to place us here as simple guards like this, I cannot accept it."

"....."

At a deserted ground near the Ancient Forest several kl away from the palace—.

At the southernmost area there—or to be more accurate, at the direction that was the nearest to the capital, several dozen Drag-Knights were stationed.

One of the two commanding officers standing at the front was sitting on a large rock and let out a long sigh along with a snicker.

She was a girl with wavy and rough long dark red hair that reached until her waist. She had a characteristic impudent smile.

She had a nice body for a girl who hadn't reached twenty. The undulation of her body style could be seen from even above her mantel.

But, seeing the warlike smile that she wore, there was no subordinate who would ogle her.

The people serving this girl who gave an impression like a lion to the people looking at her were harboring fear and also respect toward her.

The name of the girl with tender age of 18 was Nier Helvym.

She was a niece of the big man of four great nobles Bugriser Gashtoph, a candidate to be the captain of the unit under his direct control.

She possessed better skill than his real son as a Drag-Knight and as a commanding officer and became his favorite.

So to speak she was the trump card of Bugriser as four great nobles. His secret weapon who was bearing the responsibility for the next generation at his territory.

Even as a Drag-Knight she possessed the strength of an EX Class. She was also highly evaluated as a remarkable character with dauntless courage.

A girl like that was sent to this battle following Queen Raffi's request.

"Reply back at least. What a boring man. Perhaps you resemble your father."

"....."

On the other hand, the other commanding officer standing near her was a young man. He didn't react at all even toward Nier's provocation.

It wasn't that he was indifferent toward other people. He controlled all his emotions and wore an atmosphere of a professional.

The young man's name was Dawla Schultzed.

He had only just turned twenty. He was the biological son of the four great nobles Zagma Schultzed.

Zagma had a lot of sons. Among them Dawla's age was far removed from his father, but the way he fought steadily and his aptitude with Drag-Ride that was unusually high for a man were evaluated highly. He was acknowledged as the best within his territory.

This time he answered the request of Raffi and cooperated in the decisive battle against the Azure Division along with Bugriser's niece Nier.

The young man with slender face—but sharp gaze was looking toward the direction of the capital while glaring at Nier for a full ten-odd seconds.

"If you hate boredom, wouldn't it be fine if you raise an achievements in the great battle against the Lord last time? I heard that at that time it was hell with seven Ragnaroks appearing at the same time. I guess your vigorousness come from your uncle but, you will die young if you are putting on airs too much."

Cold gaze and tone as though to cut down his talking partner.

However Nier also didn't back down hearing that.

"Hah. Obviously that was what I was going to do at that time. But uncle stopped me. Can you not group me together with a coward like you?"

While they were killing time by exchanging frivolous talk like that, a group of Drag-Knights with a part of their armor painted blue could be seen from afar.

"Haa, this is boring. Even though I'll be able to make the New Kingdom indebted to me if I can save the princess, just watching the entrance won't be any significant achievement. And so, it's fine isn't it? Even if we crush that so called Azure Division——"

Nier blurted that out with a fearless smile.

The proclamation of violating the order from Raffi caused bafflement to color the faces of her subordinates.

"Don't do anything stupid. If the princess is killed before the negotiation, it won't finish with just your head. Do you want to dirty even your uncle's name too?"

".....I'm joking. This is why I hate gloomy man. But——it will be fine if it's after the negotiation is over then. We can just make up some appropriate reason and join in."

Nier shrugged while her eyes that were covered with ambition glinted fiercely.

Till the end their role was as guard to prevent any intruder into this battle but, they were giving off a premonition of disturbance.

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## Part 4

The unit led by Nier and Dawla was taking position as defensive line to cut off the path from the Ancient Forest to the capital. At that time while they were standing guard,

Lux who slipped out of the inn and met up with Azure Division was also flying in the sky toward the stage of the decisive battle.

"Vice captain, the preparation is finished. How is your body's condition?"

".....I'm alright. We will accomplish our mission without fail."

Aeril who was carrying Lisha who was pouting in dissatisfaction was flying in her EX Wyvern while talking to Lux.

In respond Lux replied with a stifled voice from under a mask that looked like a helmet covering his head.

He said that, but in reality they couldn't really prepare anything noteworthy.

Because Alma was taken hostage, the lineup of Azure Division was really small.

Kilzrake family also had several dozen Drag-Knights at their disposal, but they were nothing more than prop to show a battle strength that was more than the actual reality.

If they clashed with the elites of Syvalles starting from Krulcifer, then only Lux or Aeril would be able to stand a chance.

Therefore, the subordinates were given instruction for a distraction mission.

They wouldn't fight head on no matter what. They would use the treasures taken out from Garden abundantly to sow chaos, while Lux would

use the opening to defeat Syvalles members one by one.

They would recover Alma during that while infiltrating into Avalon, used the recording medium in their possession, and obtained information.

After that they would temporarily retreat, reorganized themselves, used the information of weak point they obtained, and crushed Sacred Eclipse and Uroboros.

"Hah....."

Bitter smile welled up just from considering the recklessness of the objectives that were listed up.

Although they had in their possession recording medium that could be played at the central of Avalon or at the library facility called the Archive, it didn't mean that it would surely contain the weak point of Sacred Eclipse and Uroboros. And even if the information existed, they also didn't know whether they could make use of it with their current battle force.

But, this situation of facing against a powerful enemy wasn't any different with five years ago.

Right now he didn't have a collaborator that was Fugil, but he didn't feel any anxiety.

Because he was wishing from the bottom of his heart to save his comrades from the Academy starting from Lisha, the girls who were important to him—.

[Also, about them..... It's impossible.]

[I see.....]

Aeril used Dragon Voice to convey her mind to Lux who was flying beside her so that Lisha in her arms wouldn't hear.

In respond Lux slightly hung his head down before he lifted his head to fire up himself.

Magialca dispatched her aide Lolotte to detain the Seven Dragon Paladins who returned to their own country after the parade was over to ask for their cooperation in defeating Fugil, but as expected they were told once more that it was impossible.

They didn't have any reason to give their assistance against the danger to the New Kingdom, and in the first place they were unable to breakthrough the binding spell to their mind.

In their mind, they thought that Fugil had been defeated and the case of Avalon had been taken care of.

[But, we're taking a desperate measure. If it goes well, it might be possible to call them here. Perhaps if Lux-kun can directly persuade them there—]

[Yeah, let's try betting in that. I don't know if it will be in time but.....]

Lux nodded in respond, then right after that Lisha who was carried by the armored arms of EX Wyvern worn by Aeril grumbled while her eyes were blindfolded.

"It seems you guys are scheming something but, there isn't any time for pointless talk you know?"

They arrived at the Ancient Forest that was several kl away from the capital Lordgalia.

The Drag-Knights of New Kingdom military were taking position at that place that should be called as the entrance.

"Are you all the Azure Diviison? Nice to meet you. I am the captain of a private force of the four great nobles, Nier Helvym. This guy is Dawla. We are ordered to watch over the negotiation and battle in this Ancient Forest."

"We don't have the authority to harm your group. But, we are tasked with preventing the reinforcement from outside as well as the intervention of other force that isn't in the battle's stipulation. That's all, go through."

The two Drag-Knights at the front who seemed to be the commanding officers introduced themselves and told them that.

One person was a red haired girl with nice style and self-assured air.

The other one was a slender man with quiet expression.

From the introduction of the two calm and bold people, Lux guessed that they were the private force of the four great nobles who were here due to Raffi's request for cooperation.

"Understood. After this we will challenge the New Kingdom to a battle that wagered the hostage of each side. Everyone here is to not be involved in the battle and to not even enter the Ancient Forest, is that right?"

"Right. Of course if the agreement is broken, then it can't be helped no matter what is done to the rule breaker. For both sides that is."

"....."

From Nier's lifted corner of the lips, the intention to join this battle was clearly felt.

But, most likely their participation into the battle would be after it turned into a melee.

In the first place Lux and Aeril didn't believe their promise in the surface that they would stay as watcher until the end.

But, they didn't say anything more in that place and advanced into the Ancient Forest.

They who were instructed by Queen Raffi to stay as spectator had nothing to gain by breaking the promise and challenged them to fight here.

Rather, it would be more profitable to interfere when the queen was in danger to make her indebted to them.

The four great nobles who were great feudal lords and New Kingdom military weren't in a simple hierarchical relationship.

Lux made his judgment exactly because he was aware of that circumstance.

"That's why, sorry that we can't save you here, princess."

"I'll gratefully accept only your feeling."

Nier turned a malicious gaze toward Lisha, but Lisha ignored it.

It seemed that even though she was becoming hostage like in the past, she was more levelheaded right now.

Lux felt relieved at Lisha's reaction while entering the Ancient Forest.

At his childhood—at the era of the Old Empire he had only heard about the rumor of this place but, this was his first time actually entering inside.

[How should I say it, this is a mysterious place. It's like—]

Lux also nodded in agreement at that impression of Aeryl.

[Yeah. It's like—we're inside a Ruin.....]

Even though it should be a nature that hadn't been touched by human hands for many months and years, the way the vegetations grew and the undulation of the terrain possessed strange regularity.

Besides the vegetations and the ores themselves felt unfamiliar somehow.

Lux led the Azure Division force and advanced straight to the center of the deep forest. Before long a huge lake appeared.

".....-!"

At the place after the came out of the forest, Queen Raffi and New Kingdom military could be seen at the opposite shore of the lake.

They were taking position at the location that he had decided beforehand based on the information Yoruka brought back.

"At noon..... Just in time. I have been waiting, Azure Division's vice leader-sama. Errr—can I ask you what name should I call you with?"

From Queen Raffi's tone and expression, there was no excessive killing intent, hostility, or even anything like anxiety that could be seen.

Perhaps it could be seen as her bluffing but, this wasn't her trying to take a calm attitude on the surface.

Her inside, her humanity already became an existence that transcended the highs and lows of emotion.

The members of Syvalles surely didn't notice but, that was what Lux felt.

Until now Lux shouldn't have given her any clue that he was the ringleader of Azure Division, but for some reason he harbored a feeling as though everything had been seen through.

(Calm down. In this situation her majesty Raffi is also still unable to use Sacred Eclipse's power—it should be so.)

Now that one of the Ruins' Grand Forces was taken out and the previous Endless ended incompletely, it was impossible to greatly overwrite the contradiction in reality using complete perception manipulation.

The New Kingdom military didn't even notice the change of Queen Raffi's appearance into a girl, but if she showed her true form as Sacred Eclipse, as expected they would surely notice.

(I have to, defeat her. Somehow, I have to tear it off from her majesty Raffi—)

The dark side of Sacred Eclipse that was created as a system to save mankind.

The truth that Lux feared had been told to him and confirmed by Yoruka's report.

"You can call me anything you like. More importantly, the promised thing is certain isn't it?"

Lux replied like that, and then Aeryl started negotiating with Raffi just like arranged beforehand.

The hostage exchange and then the battle—this was the confirming of the rule for that.

"Yes—. Your side too, can you show Lisha to me?"

".....My deepest apologies, Haha-ue."

Lisha whose hands were tied and her eyes blindfolded with a Blade pointed on her back slightly hung her head down.

In respond Raffi smiled in relieve and replied.

"I'm glad you are safe..... Don't worry Lisha. I will save you without fail."

".....-!?"

Raffi's face smiled gently.

Lux's back shuddered feeling the thick killing intent that was emitted behind it.

He felt the threat of Sacred Eclipse that possessed the abilities of all Ragnaroks while the other side also pushed out the restrained Alma.

"I'm also alright here. Quickly bring down the hammer on these guys, this politician and her hangers-on who are committing evil while acting righteously."

Alma in her own way was acting as a courageous traitor just as planned.

He was anxious because he didn't know what happened to her after getting captured, but from her attitude it seemed she was alright for now.

"Then, the battle will begin ten minutes from now inside the Ancient Forest. The soldiers of both camps that will participate in this battle are only those who are currently present here——, coming out of the Ancient Forest will be considered as retreat....."

Raffi read up the stipulation regarding this battle that had been sent beforehand.

"When the commander is captured or killed, a chance to surrender will be given to the enemy army. Lizsharte Atismata and Alma Atismata are here as guarantee so that both sides will protect the stipulation but, by the time each side take them back that binding will become meaningless. Surrender will be done by dispelling the equipped Drag-Knight and handing over the Sword Device——is that acceptable?"

"Yeah. I swear to abide by that stipulation with this Grand Force on the line."

Aeril nodded and lifted up a huge crystal for all to see.

"Then——, let's exchange blow ten minutes later. Until then the line of the lake cannot be crossed."

"....."

The negotiation itself ended with that, but Lux checked the lineup of New Kingdom's side once more.

The unfamiliar Drag-Knights around the queen——the three masked people were most likely Automatas.

In addition were dozens of men who seemed to be ordinary soldiers. They must be the royal guard.

They would surely focus on their protection duty.



Therefore after this they would move to the northeast side of the lake and wouldn't make any large movement.

And then the role to take back Lisha should be mainly taken by Syvalles.

Krulcifer, Philuffy, and the Triad were all present.

For Lux everything would hang on whether he would be able to break them up from each other and then quickly defeated them.

(Celis-senpai isn't here.....? Is she planning to take another action?)

He also couldn't see Fugil's figure. He was somewhat uneasy of that but.....

[Lux-kun..... As expected it's just like the information that I confirmed.....]

[Yeah.....]

He secretly talked with Aeryl through the Dragon Voice.

Avalon was an assembly of facility that could be separated into several. Its heart was the central.

The rooms other than the central room were small facilities that could be used by someone with a certain level of supervisory authority.

The Sky Palace that Listelka of the Lord once used was also one of those facilities.

This time they had business with one of them, the information management facility called the Archive that was like a library.

The placement of Avalon on the whole was fundamentally in the shape of a hexagram. They also understood the role of Archive in general.

To locate the Archive that was hidden in the Ancient Forest and entered it, they could only use Aeryl's authority as a Lord and searched for the

entrance.

Magialca's aide Lolotte was accompanying his master.

He could only leave this to his subordinates in Azure Division now.

"Well then—later. I will have you all atone for causing the commotion this time at that time."

Raffi said that, then both sides returned into the forest and started giving command.

Excluding Lux and Aeryl, Azure Division was made up from twelve Wyvern users, twelve Wurm users, and ten Drake users.

Each of them possessed skill above the intermediate level but, this battle strength wasn't sufficient at all to directly fight against Syvalles.

[.....Haa, this is the fault of Lux-kun who trained everyone too much.]

[Quite a lot of their battle strength had been gathered up even before I came to the Academy you know..... Or rather, if you say that then you are also one of the cause of it isn't it.....?]

Aeryl was making a frivolous talk must be her attempt to make Lux relax.

Seen from the side, the difference in battle strength was despairingly wide.

If both sides clashed head on, most likely their side would be completely annihilated in less than ten minutes.

Lux had a strategy in order to overturn that situation.

The facility called Cocoon that seemed to be placed at the south of the Ancient Forest—the plant facility to refine Abyss that they also discovered before. They would aim to there.

Because they obtained a lot of horn flutes from the Garden last time, they would use the Abysses that were manufactured in the plant to sow chaos.

The order to the Abyss would be only to destroy the Drag-Ride. He intended to forbid killing the users.

[Haa, Lux-kun is terrifying. Putting aside everyone of Syvalles, to think that you will even take the average soldiers into consideration.]

[I know that this is a naïve thinking. But—]

[Yes. There won't be any meaning in doing this if it's not like that.]

Sacrificing and abandoning the innocent minority that didn't know anything in order to allow the majority to live at their own convenience.

Perhaps it was something unavoidable for statesman, but it was different from Lux's wish.

In that case, not pursuing that ideal until the very limit would make him lost sight of the conviction persisting within him. It would even take away his strength and resolve.

Singlen was a man who could abandon what he considered as unnecessary.

At the same time, he persisted on his own path of supremacy based on the thinking of pursuing the path that he believed as correct and taking command.

It was a splendid path in its own way.

Lux was aiming for a noble path that was different from that man but one that wouldn't lose even against him.

The power of Sacred Eclipse.

Even if Raffi was someone who had gone through a life that was filled with hardships, ruling over people with inhuman power was something that

mustn't be done—.

Right after the proclamation of the decisive battle, Lux first aimed toward the Abyss production plant with Aeryl as fast as possible.

Right now he was using normal Wyvern in order to minimize the consumption of his stamina as much as possible but—.

[We can only hope that she will do a great work for the rest.]

[It's natural but right now there is no sign of New Kingdom military. We're entering the plant facility like this.]

[Yeah. Let's go!]

He checked the plan with Aeryl and then sped up his Drag-Ride even further.

Their destination was a section where wreckages of stone building were lying around.

They found a strange trace on the dug up ground. Aeryl held her hand over it.

Lisha was still blindfolded so that she wouldn't be able to see through their tactic.

Then, a window shining bluish white appeared from empty air.

[A Lord's presence is confirmed. Will you enter the Cocoon—Abyss production plant now?]

Only two minutes had passed since the meeting before this until here.

They were still in the phase before both sides crossed the boundary of the lake and clashed.

The subordinates other than Lisha and Aeryl and Lux were asked to accomplish different objective, and so the force of Azure Division was split

into two.

One group was the diversion unit against the enemy camp.

After they released the Abysses from here, the subordinates would control them with the horn flutes and bought time as much as possible.

When they were going to start preparing for that, the path to inside the plant was opened.

"A Lord.....? You, who in the world are you!?"

Lisha's perception was deceived using the power of Baptims that Aeryl possessed, so she was unable to realize Aeryl's true identity.

But because she was perceiving all the other facts than that, Lisha made a dubious face.

"....."

Naturally both Lux and Aeryl didn't respond and continued their preparation silently.

Most likely Raffi also planned to use this facility, because there was already a lot of Abyss sleeping inside.

It could be said as an opening that they could take advantage because the opponent didn't think that Aeryl would be rescued and made to cooperate.

[Aeryl. How long will it take until all the Abysses are released from the plant?]

[Err..... Perhaps if I have five more minutes—]

[Yosh, then we will make it.]

There were seven minutes remaining until the time that was decided for the battle to begin for real.

If they could make nearly a hundred Abysses here into ally during that time, they would be in advantage in this battle without doubt.

[Starting the transfer. Please be careful.]

A robotic voice spoke, at the same time light blinked brightly. Lux and Aeril felt like they were weightless.

They were standing inside the plant when they noticed.

[This place—just as I thought]

Lux looked around at the countless capsules surrounding them and muttered with Dragon Voice.

Aeril also nodded in respond.

[Yes. It's the same with the plant facility underground the old castle at Guernica. Looks like we're right that Raffi and Fugil carried it out from Avalon.]

The place where Celis and Philuffy fought the formidable enemy Mishis more than two weeks ago.

At that time the interior was somewhat destroyed from the battle, but the rubbles had been removed and now a lot of Abysses were squirming inside the capsules once more.

"What's this, strange presence.....? Why is something like this inside New Kingdom's forest—"

Lisha who didn't know that the Ancient Forest was turned into Avalon sensed the strange atmosphere and muttered, but Lux and Aeril also couldn't tell her.

[Then, I'll free the Abysses with my authority so, Lux-kun please stand guard so that no one will distur—.....-!?!]

[Watch out Aeril!]

The moment Aeryl reached out toward the object that was the activation device, Lux felt a presence and drove his Wyvern in front of the girl to protect her.

Instantly a single thrust of a lance that moved through the shortest route without any pointless motion was reflexively blocked by Lux's Blade.

"Gu, u.....!"

"—Lightning Flash"

But, the instant he skillfully diverted the spear tip, \*BASHII!\* dazzling electricity burst to the surrounding.

Celis's voice could be heard.

And then, coming out from the shadow of an Abyss's capsule was the special armament of her Divine Drag-Ride Lindwurm—Lightning Lance.

That spear that was tinged with electricity and could attack until mid-range by emitting electricity would be transmitted to the armor even when it was properly blocked. It had the effect to down the output of a Drag-Ride.

Thus, electricity flowed through the tip of the spear into the Blade that it touched and Lux's movement was stopped for a moment.

(Damn it!? This attack is—, a trap!)

In order to intentionally make her attack was deflected, she didn't put all her strength into it and only concentrated on the lance's electric attack.

[Lux-kun!]

Without delay Aeryl wrapped Lux's armor with a Wire Tail and pulled him back along with his Wyvern.

Thanks to her immediately grasping a weapon that could support, she was barely able to protect Lux.

A moment later, the space where Lux was just at was gouged by the lance that Celis thrust out once more.

The sure kill thrust that was unleashed after gathering enough strength would surely decide the battle if it actually landed.

(What in the world! Even though the battle still hasn't started, Celis-senpai is here!)

"Why are you here!? You are planning to break the stipulation!?"

Aeril whose true identity was hidden by perception manipulation yelled toward Celis in Lux's place.

It was natural but, if the stipulation of the battle this time was broken, then it couldn't be helped even if the hostages from both sides were killed.

And then, this place was located at the southwest side which was beyond the boundary of the lake, so even entering to here shouldn't be allowed until seven minutes later when the battle started.

Raffi shouldn't break the stipulation so suddenly because of that.

Furthermore there was no way that Celis of Syvalles could be here.

They made light of the other side like that, but that assumption was suddenly betrayed.

Most likely Celis had been sent to hide in this Abyss production plant before the negotiation.

She wouldn't make it in time here if that wasn't the case.

"What are you talking about? I'm only going to deal with an enemy though?"

"Tsu.....!?"



They didn't notice because the head armor part was hiding it, but there was no light in Celis's eyes.

She controlled Lindwurm with hollow and suspicious atmosphere and thrust her lance once more with a tremendous speed.

Lux somehow used his Scale Blade to match against that superb and powerful attack.

"Uh, gu.....!"

\*BACHiII-.....!\*

An instant later, the origin point of the opponent's attack was crushed and the power of the attack was pushed back as a counterattack.

As expected Lux was able to deal with the attack when it was the second time, but he was unable to also block the electricity from the spear tip and his whole body was paralyzed.

On the other hand Celis also received the impact of the counter and she was blown backward and faltered.

"This technique is—? No, it's irrelevant. If I can just, rescue Lizsharte"

For an instant her eyes opened wide in bewilderment, but she immediately switched her feeling and her expression returned into a serious one.

On the other hand Lux was also feeling bewildered at Celis's strange reaction while quickly pulling out Bahamut's Sword Device.

"—Break Purge!"

This time because he would be forced into a long consecutive battle, he planned to save his stamina as much as possible, but if he did something like holding back against a powerful opponent like Celis, he would be instantly defeated.

He removed his armor parts by sending them flying as buckshot to attack the enemy while at the same time erasing any opening during his summoning of new armor.

"\_\_\_\_\_"

But, Celis twisted her armored body and turned her side profile toward Lux, to keep the hit on her body to the minimum.

Without pause she held her huge lance at the height of her eyes and sharply stepped forward.

"Wha-.....!?"

Even though Lux also deployed Bahamut in high speed and equipped it, Celis's counterattack was just slightly faster.

Aeril interrupted with her Wire Tail, but Celis didn't falter and charged forward with her spear.

"Guh, u.....!"

It seemed she didn't make in time to transmit energy into her lance because the Lightning Flash wasn't activated.

Even so the impact of the thrust pierced through Bahamut and dealt damage inside Lux's body.

He was blown backward for ten-odd ml and the Drag-Ride's function was downed temporarily.

(This is, bad..... I completely, miscalculated!)

It was surprising that Celis was here, but more than that Lux himself had been strengthened by Baptism and he thought he had become stronger.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that conceit invited this blunder.

He believed that he had evaluated Celis's true strength more than enough, but even though her mental state looked more unstable than usual, her lance handling was well-executed.

[Lux-kun! Be careful, she isn't like before! Most likely she received Baptism and got strengthened!]

".....-!?"

Aeril pointed that out while using her whip to break three capsules filled with Abyss near Celis.

She was contriving to release the Abysses to divert Celis's attention, but the girl wasn't perturbed at all and finished off the three chimeras with the shortest motion.

Furthermore, she didn't even give a glance at Aeril knowing that it was an act of desperation from her.

Till the end she considered Lux as the biggest threat and observed for a chance to switch into offense once more.

[But, what's with Celis-senpai's condition? It's like she doesn't realize at all that this Divine Drag-Ride is Bahamut.]

In this situation right now the plan couldn't be carried on, so originally Celis should notice that she was facing Lux, but it wasn't that she wasn't noticing, she wasn't paying him any mind.

[Perhaps..... I think.....she is receiving mental pollution from the ability of Ragnarok Iblis. Her doubt toward this strategy that Queen Raffi ordered her to do must have been taken away.]

[So, it's like that.....!]

Lux understood Aeril's reasoning while intercepting the approaching Celis with his great sword.

It helped that she didn't notice Lux's identity, but on the other hand he was hard pressed here.

It was also a great threat to clash head on with Celis, but if he was unable to see through her point that was strengthened by Baptism, there was a possibility of him getting instantly defeated.

So that he would only come into contact with Lindwurm's spear at minimum, he defended in a way of warding off her thrust to left and right or up and bottom. He would look for chance and dodged before moving into attack.

"Divine Gate"

"......-!"





But the territory of Divine Raiment that was deployed at the same time spread out to the surrounding. In that instant Celis activated the Divine Raiment of instant teleportation.

Thinking that he would be attacked from behind, Lux didn't immediately defend but flew toward Aeryl.

"——!"

Aeryl was focusing as support this time, so she would be defeated if she was taken by surprise even if she was wearing EX Wyvern.

Thinking that Lux flew with all his strength. In that instant Celis swiftly turned around and drew back her spear.

(Damn it! I was lured to attack.....!)

With him moving at top speed, he couldn't stop his attack.

However, Lux finally understood what point that was strengthened from Celis.

"What the.....this reaction speed of her!?"

"It's only you two who are slow. For the current me——"

What Aeryl said was exactly the answer of what the strengthened point of Celis was.

In contrast with Yoruka who got her eyesight strengthened by Baptism and obtained mystic eye that could read presence, Celis right now was possessing reaction speed that was transcending human limit.

Human's reaction speed.

The slight time needed to confirm the information, pondered, and then gave an order to the body through brain waves.

Celis's reaction speed became a step faster compared to the normal human.

The strengthening of nerves' transmission—most likely it put burden to the person, but in a battle to the limit where victory and defeat would be decided in an instant, being able to move a step ahead became an overwhelming advantage.

And then—this strengthening could be said to be the most optimum to make the best use of Celis's tactical thinking—her swift established tactic that had been raised until it was half conditioned reflex to bring out the best response depending on the situation and executed it.

Celis's combat strength was greatly increased just by increasing her reaction speed a level higher.

She wasn't making prediction, she was observing the enemy's move before overtaking that movement and responded with the best reaction. Such thing was now possible for her.

Therefore, it was an ability that was symmetrical with Lux's weapon that was his superhuman foresight, and furthermore Lux's affinity with it was the worst.

Celis's answer that was produced by her extremely focused reaction speed was to defend using her spear as shield.

(Why is she defending? If it's the current Celis-senpai, it should be easy for her to intercept with counterattack, and yet—)

Doubt crossed the mind of Lux who was taking a stance with her great sword while flying.

But, Celis's return technique that he had never seen before right after that burst before his eyes.

"—Strong Lightning Flash!"



At the instant of impact when both of their weapons came into contact, an intense flash burned Lux's retina.

Electricity that was stocked in full power surged and even though he only came into contact with it for an instant, a tremendous shock pierced through Lux's body.

"Guh, AAaaAAAA!"

[Lux-kun-!?!]

Aeril yelled hearing the groan slipping out from the corner of his lips.

(So the defense, is for this.....!)

Lux received electricity damage that made him unable to feel his limbs while comprehending Celis's technique.

She accumulated Lindwurm's energy until the maximum and unleashed the electric attack from the special armament Lightning Lance at the moment of contact.

Under usual circumstances the opponent would be wary of her and reacted by taking distance from her if she showed any sign of the electric attack, but by staying still and concentrating the energy, it became possible to release the maximum output of the attack in the short time without showing any sign beforehand.

It was a counter that discarded every other action and focused only in interception.

Furthermore, it was a feat that would be difficult to time correctly without having the ability of super reaction speed obtained from Baptism.

(So Celis-senpai, became this strong, after receiving Baptism.....)

Lux's thinking that he would be able to defeat Syvalles if it was one by one wasn't too optimistic.

But, it was just that her strength was surpassing Lux's imagination.

Lux himself was barely avoiding from having his armor dispelled after the ability of his whole body was strengthened several times by Baptism, but without that he would be defeated by a single attack.

However—his body was paralyzed and couldn't move.

At that time, the hollow Celis who was being mentally polluted opened her mouth.

"I have to save Lizsharte, save the princess. In his place..... In order to not let him force himself more than this too, we have to, become stronger——"

"——"

Celis who was manipulated by Raffi and temporarily turned into a puppet that would only defeat the enemy unconsciously slipped out those words.

Those words lit fire to Lux's mind that was getting fainthearted.

At the same time, Celis also staggered and broke her stance.

Because the full powered thrust that Lux unleashed when he rushed slipped through the guard of the lance and pierced Lindwurm's armor.

[Aeril..... You don't need to assist me.....! Focus all your attention to protect Lisha-sama and liberate the Abyss plant.]

[Lux-kun, but, with your state——]

He was showered with considerable amount of electricity, but he was still conscious.

Lux had to win this fight and saved everyone.

It didn't matter that she lost her memory of that three days of parade, or that she was manipulated by mental pollution, Celis was currently doing her

best in her own way.

She stayed as she was believing on Lux.

In that case, no matter how powerful she was, he couldn't be defeated here.

"It seems that you can still go on. Then——, here I come."

Celis who was also pulling herself together like Lux drove Lindwurm forward.

In the next instant, the lance's thrust was sent out with a force that was like a storm.

"Guh.....!"

The precise and exquisite spear handling, the girl who overcame deathly battle against powerful enemy had her technique, resilience, and heart polished all the more. Lux understood that.

She was cornering Lux with unshakeable heart, with superb piloting and tactic without any wasted movement that even Lux couldn't easily see through.

The consecutive attacks that were like raging waves didn't even have any holding back that the normal Celis would usually do.

Her lance was thrusting with the intention of piercing the enemy with certainty and dealing a lethal wound.

(Strong, extremely so..... Celis-senpai who obtained a new strength is.....)

She endured the intense pain of the Baptims that surpassed the imagination and overcame the risk of death must also because of her feeling toward Lux.

When he thought of that, he was feeling respect along with warm feeling enveloping him.

Her nobility as four great nobles. Her sense of responsibility and kindness.

He could trust her from the bottom of his heart as a senior, as a friend, and as a woman.

Raffi's plan that strengthened her in order to subjugate Lux and brainwashed her before stationing her surpassed Lux's prediction.

(But, you're mistaken. Queen Raffi. You still—don't understand the true Celis-senpai!)

Lux strongly thought that each time the sword and spear clashed, each time he was overwhelmed by her strength.

Raffi must be purposely controlling Celis with the power of Iblis so that she wouldn't harbor any question or doubt, but she was mistaken.

Celis's strength lied exactly in her doubt.

Her strength wasn't strength without doubt, it was her heart that conquered her doubt.

Her noble figure that faced every kind of difficulty was the true source of her strength.

Lux was finally starting to dodge the fierce attack of Lindwurm that wouldn't loath even killing the opponent without hesitation.

And then, he activated the sure kill Divine Raiment.

"—Reload on Fire!"

"......-!?"

Crimson light surged from Bahamut's armor. Celis's eyes that were shadowed opened wide.

His aim was the compression strengthening of time with Celis and Lindwurm as the target.

At the first five second the other's speed was dramatically decreased. Then the opponent would be showered with consecutive attack using that opponent to decide the battle. It was the sure kill Violent Strike.

But, Celis instantly vanished from Reload on Fire's area of effect.

She didn't use Divine Gate offensively until now was to save it for evasion.

Lux also kept his back turned toward the wall, so he managed to prevent a surprise attack by Divine Gate.

But the moment he thought that, Celis who escaped to outside the range of Reload on Fire took a terrifying action.

"—Break Purge"

She didn't fly into Lux's range, instead she took a distance of ten-odd ml away and performed Break Purge.

The armor buckshot that was fired from Lindwurm stopped still in midair at the area in front of Lux that was under the super deceleration influence of Reload on Fire, sealing Lux's own movement.

(Damn it.....!)

On the other hand Celis reduced her defense armor until the limit and took the form specialized for attack. She was focusing all her energy to her back wings.

She charged at the timing when the first five seconds of Reload on Fire's compression strengthening passed and without pause she took the stance to thrust her lance.

Furthermore, there wasn't even several seconds remaining for Lux who was cornered to the wall with the option of escaping to the surrounding was sealed by the armor buckshot.

It seemed Celis didn't notice that her opponent was Lux due to the mental pollution, but she perfectly executed the countermeasure against Bahamut.

"—I can't permit you to use that Drag-Ride. It should be, returned to him."

"....."

As soon as Celis muttered that with an empty expression, the lightened Lindwurm in its attack specialization form charged with super acceleration.

She flew like a streak of bullet clad in lightning, piercing through the air.

.

(—Got him)

.

Celis who was charging forward in conviction was receiving mental pollution from Raffi a little while ago.

Celis who didn't know that Raffi was Sacred Eclipse didn't even have any leeway to resist. Her heart was eroded and she was turned into a puppet that would carry out Raffi's order loyally and hid here.

In order to take Lisha back, in order to accomplish her duty as a member of four great nobles, she was instructed to pour all her strength even more than anything she had done before.

No matter who her opponent was, she would annihilate New Kingdom's enemy without hesitation.

She was made to think that it was the only truth, the correct path.

That was why, while she had witnessed Bahamut's ability, she gave no thought to who her opponent was.

Her dearest wish would be granted in just an instant later.

(And yet, what is this? This feeling.....)

Even though she should be without hesitation for his sake too, she was feeling doubt at the fact that she was making this choice itself.

(No..... There was something that I was once taught. There is someone who saved me who was fixated, blindly believed, and escaped into what I thought as right.)

Because she lost her teacher because of her action, she became obsessed to righteousness and committed a mistake. But the young man who was her teacher's grandson saved her.

He was always thinking, worrying, and hesitating by himself.

He didn't run away from that suffering and tried to face the truth.

(That's why, I fall in love with him..... I want to learn from his way of living——)

The binding of mental pollution that was covering Celis's heart was clearing.

——Lux.

(There is something that I want to convey to you. Even if this feeling won't be fulfilled, at the very least I want to tell you, my feeling——)

The moment that was prolonged within her mind was brought back into the reality's result.

Instantly, a tremendous impact that was centered on Lindwurm's armored shoulder smashed through Celis.

.

[—Lux-kun-!]

Aeril who was controlling the Abyss plant witnessed the sure kill attack that Celis and Lux unleashed against each other and yelled.

The after wave from two impacts crossing each other made dust to scatter and fiercely shook the Abyss plant called the Cocoon.

"Kuh.....!"

Aeril deployed a barrier using her EX Wyvern to cover Lisha and somehow endured the shockwave.

The cloud of dust settled along with the passing of time and the figure of Lux and Celis came into view.

"Ah....."

Aeril raised her voice in astonishment.

When her sight cleared up, the battle had been decided.

The attack of Lightning Lance from Celis's attack specialized form was dodged by Lux with a twist of his body at the very last moment, then he landed a slash of his Blade on Lindwurm's shoulder in a counter.

"U, a....."

Because the Force Core that was the heart part of Drag-Ride was struck, Celis lost consciousness from the impact and her armor was dispelled right afterwards.

—\*Kiin\*.

Celis's body that crumbled along with a faint light was immediately caught by Lux.



[You did it Lux-kun. You managed to defeat her without injuring her.]

Aeril came running in relieve, but Lux shook his head slightly.

[No, it's the reverse. I was saved..... By Celis-senpai.]

[Eh.....?]

Aeril tilted her head with a puzzled look. Lux smiled while breathing roughly.

The counter of Quick Draw that he unleashed within his extreme focus.

It was the evolved form of Critical Strike that made use of the opponent's attack momentum and slashed with pinpoint accuracy to double the attack power, but because he was beaten to a punch, originally it should become a simultaneous defeat for both sides.

And yet Lux was able to win because Celis immediately diverted the tip of her lance not toward Lux's torso or heart, but to a spot that wouldn't become fatal wound.

Who was Lux, and was he really an enemy that she should point her weapon toward?

Her thinking reached to that point and she tried to avoid the vital spot.

She shook off Iblis's mental pollution from Raffi who was fused with Sacred Eclipse by her own will.

That was why—he was saved.

[No way, don't tell me—]

[I don't know how it exactly is. But surely it's like that, that's what I feel.]

Lux sighed in relieve and moved with Celis in his arms.

Numbness was remaining in his body due to the electricity attack he received just now, but he could still move.

[Somehow....., it's envious, that kind of relationship.]

Aeril made a complicated smile and leaked out a small sigh.

Those words must be referring to the bond of trust that was tied between Lux and Celis.

[What are you saying? It's also the same with Aeril.]

[Fufu, thank you. More importantly—is it alright that you don't rest here?]

The face of the girl who was asking him while showing a mischievous smile was lovely.

[I want to rest but, we have no time for that, I'll just accept your feeling gratefully.]

Lux laid down Celis who was dressed in pilot suit on the transfer spot to the outside and smiled.

Raffi had suddenly ignored the stipulation to this battle and placed the controlled Celis inside the Ruin. She had made a strong move against Lux.

There was no time to take a breather.

He didn't recall leaving behind any proof but, there was no doubt that Raffi was thinking of Lux as the central character of Azure Division.

[Lux-kun. Then, let's return outside—to the Ancient Forest. Prepare! I'll also switch to Drag-Ride Zahhak beforehand.]

[Yeah..... It's fine.]

"....."

He replied to Aeryl using Dragon Voice and kept Bahamut equipped.

Lisha whose hands were tied and her eyes blindfolded closed her mouth without saying anything.

Aeryl dispelled the armor of EX Wyvern and wore Divine Drag-Ride Zahhak.

Her armor wasn't damaged from the battle with Celis, but it was in order to fulfill a necessary condition for the strategy after this.

Although the possibility was high that Raffi was vaguely suspecting him, Lux still couldn't expose his true identity so—.

They couldn't observe the situation outside from inside this Ruin.

They tensed themselves in preparation to this situation that was their most defenseless in a sense.

Lux and Aeryl, then the restrained Lisha and the unconscious Celis.

The four of them were teleported to the outside.

(.....These two, don't tell me)

Lisha who was blindfolded couldn't grasp the situation, but a single imagination was swelling inside her.

.

## Part 5

"Something is——, strange isn't it?"

The camp of New Kingdom military located at the northeast, with the lake at the center of the Ancient Forest acting as the boundary.

Raffi was looking up at the sky while muttering in front of a crumbling shrine that was hiding Avalon's central underneath.

The sky that was sunny until just now was starting to get cloudy. Rain mixed with snow was starting to fall in large drops.

Raffi who was wearing a dress didn't feel cold.

But, the grey scenery that called to mind the feeling of desolation made her recalled the past when she was alone.

"What do you mean, master?"

The Automata beside her, Arshalia asked.

The royal guard from the New Kingdom military who didn't know Raffi's true form was standing guard at some distance away.

Therefore, she placed the Automata at her side right now.

"At present I believe that master plan is the best. The Abyss's production plant——Cocoon has Celis posted in there, and your splendid move is also excellent. Taking into account that at present the Azure Division currently are focusing on diversionary action, they don't have considerable battle strength. Syvalles will be able to deal with them."

"Well, that's true but——....."

Currently, the New Kingdom was in advantage at the battle situation. The Azure Division was being pressured and forced to lose ground.

In the worst case that their side was suppressed, she had prepared Celis and also another method for additional blow beforehand.

She also had readiness to be able to deal even with unexpected situation.

However, it felt like thing was going too well.

(This manner of doing describe Lux Arcadia to the tee. He will secure his allies safety as much as possible and won't treat them as sacrificial stone no matter what..... As I thought, the actual mastermind of Azure Division isn't Alma, I'm not wrong to decide that it's him it seems.)

Even if Raffi's plan was surpassing Lux's strategy, it was going too well.

Having said that, looking from the data that they picked up from Yos Tork's wreckage, it didn't seem likely that Yoruka who was also wounded from that battle would be saved in reserve as trump card.

".....Can you call the Triad, the three members of Syvalles to here? There is something that I want to ask them."

".....? What do you need from them?"

"Well, they might feign ignorance even if I ask them, but there is something that I'm slightly curious about."

Krulcifer, Philuffy, Celis, and Yoruka, the Divine Drag-Ride users that were the main force of Syvalles had been checked.

But, Raffi noticed that the girls below them weren't being monitored nor she had prepared countermeasure against them.

For some reason, Raffi's plan.....or rather, the movement of the Drag-Knights of New Kingdom military that she was commanding were strangely being predicted. That was the feeling that she got.

That was the out of place feeling toward the present condition that was going too well.

Of course Azure Division also had considerable number of Drake at their side so she knew that they were sensing their side's movement, but there was a risk that her plan that couldn't be predicted with just that would be seen through.

"My apologies but they already crossed the lake and moved to the south side. Furthermore it seems they're focusing into their battle that they also cut off the Dragon Voice's communication."

".....I see, then even though they are presumed innocent from the lack of evidence, it's fine to decide that they're traitor isn't it?"

"—?"

Raffi was giving off a vague disquieting hint. The Automata Arshalia tilted her head seeing that.

"I'm someone who has been betrayed so many times after all, so I'm sensitive in regard to betrayal."

Raffi's smiling lips were tinged with shadow.

If there was normal human in this place, they would be trembling from her appearance and order. However the Gear Leader Arshalia responded with a straight face.

(As expected, history is something that repeats itself. Fugil, it's just like you said—)

The conduct of statesman that had been repeated hundreds of time since the past.

The Automata girl had also guessed Fugil's feeling that was battered with grief each time that happened.

The feeling of the hero who right now was only standing alone at the central of Avalon observing the battle outside.

"The promise with Arshalia. If only you weren't forced to become something like a [hero], it wouldn't become like this....."

The Automata looked to the sky and muttered like that with a voice so small no one could hear it.

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## Part 6

\*KlIIIIN!\* A faint buzzing was resounding inside the head.

Lux and others who broke out from the Abyss plant, Cocoon met up with a female Drake user of Azure Division who was hiding with camouflage nearby.

They had made only this girl to standby in this area beforehand to relay information. Lux was relieved that she was alright.

Seeing that Celis was placed in this place, he completely thought that even this girl who was hiding in camouflage was also targeted and defeated.

[How goes the situation in general? Can you tell us?]

[That's, it's..... It's going exactly as vice leader-dono planned. But, that's—.....watch out-!]

[—!]

The Drake user immediately yelled with a trembling voice.

Instantly two wires that extended from the forest's thicket in high speed attacked toward Lux.

"Kuh!?"

Lux was saved by the girl's voice and barely deflected the tip of the approaching wire.

But, the other wire was different.

The aim wasn't Bahamut, but Lisha beside them.

The thick wire entangled around Lisha's body and she was pulled in with high speed.



The identity of the existence who kidnapped Lisha with a superb timing was clear even without seeing the person.

(Phi-chan.....!? Why is she here!?)

Philuffy Aingram.

He couldn't see because of the curtain of thick vegetations, but there was no doubt that it was Philuffy who fired Pile Anchor that was the special armament of Divine Drag-Ride Typhon.

But, it was unthinkable for the girl who was wearing a huge land battle type Drag-Ride to be undetectable from the Drake user of Azure Division even though they were inside a forest.

"I, I's sorry-! I was captured just now and got threatened. She told me to not expose that she is hiding there——"

"So it's like that....."

This was Philuffy so with her personality even if this Azure Division member didn't listen to what she say, he believed she would stop with only destroying her armor, but for someone who didn't know Philuffy she must felt scared.

But, there was no use to regret it.

Thanks to the countermeasure before they exited the underground Ruin, Philuffy didn't notice Lux's identity——perhaps.

[Lux-kun, I'll——]

[Yeah. Aeryl you hide! Most likely your trick is still not exposed.]

With Lux standing in front of Aeryl and Philuffy firing Pile Anchor from the other side of a bush, both sides couldn't see each other clearly.

In that case, it was possible to continue the mission as it was.

"Take care, of Lisha-sama."

Philuffy who reeled in Lisha toward her using Pile Anchor quickly released the binding and blindfold of Lisha who was entangled in wire. Then she used her armored arm and threw her behind.

Another Drag-Knight who was at the back caught her.

The ambusher hiding at the area wasn't just Philuffy.

The silhouettes of three other Drag-Knights than Philuffy were there.

"Roooger! The Sword Devices of Lisha-sama that had been recovered beforehand are also prepared."

"Missy Philuffy. What are you going to do now?"

"Yep. I intend to fight, but I'll be fine alone."

"Yes. Understood. Please be really careful——"

Lux heard the voices and judged that the newcomers were the familiar Triad.

The three were prioritizing securing Lisha rather than fighting Lux.

In a sense it could be said as the natural action.

[Lux-kun-!? At this rate——]

Lux nodded at Aeryl's yell through the Dragon Voice.

Lisha getting taken back was an alarming situation.

Each camp having their own hostage became the major premise so that the rule of this battle would be kept.

If Raffi intended to lay the blame of her sin on Azure Division, she wouldn't kill Alma at this point of time but——if they let Lisha escaped like

this then there was no doubt they would be in great disadvantage.

Aeril yelled because she was worried about that but—.

[It's alright. Lisha-sama still hasn't been handed over to her majesty's hand. Besides.....]

Lux held Bahamut's great sword at the height of his eyes and resolved himself to fight.

[Take Celis-senpai to a safe place. I will—, stop Phi-chan here.]

If Raffi had been secretly applying Baptism to the members of Syvalles, then the possibility that Philuffy had also been strengthened physically was high.

Certainly she was a really powerful enemy, but from the beginning this was a road that couldn't be avoided.

He only requested Aeril to be on her guard in case there was Automata around, then he entrusted Celis to the Drake user and told them to retreat.

Philuffy who saw that advanced toward Lux once more and showed her figure.

"I don't know who you are but, if you're bad person, I'll capture you."

Philuffy told Lux that with her usual vacantly expressionless face.

In respond Lux lifted his jet black great sword and immediately rushed with a slash.

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## Part 7

—Around the same time, at the other side.

Near the entrance of the Ancient Forest, the referee of this battle arena—the units of Nier and Dawla that were entrusted with the role to not let anyone enter or anyone who came out to run away were also encountering a change.

"Hmmm. I see, that's good."

The girl who was sitting on a large rock wearing pilot suit while swinging her feet in boredom received a report from her subordinate Drake user and showed a joyful look.

"What happened inside the forest? Share the information."

"That's fine with me. But only if you promise not to stop me."

"That'll depend on the information. Say it quickly."

"Then I won't say. You can just keep watching there the whooole time. A man who is simply obediently watching when the New Kingdom is in danger—you'll be evaluated by the future generation as the exemplar fool who can only be used like a tool."

When Nier said that with a malicious look, Dawla lightly clicked his tongue without any change in expression.

"The queen will blame me if I let you leave this post without any justifiable reason you know? You intend to act with fitting reason aren't you?"

Dawla glared threateningly, in respond Nier laughed fearlessly.

But, at the end it seemed she compromised and shrugged in exaggeration.

"It's simply that the time has come. Something happen that merits me and you to move from here."

"Hou....."

The information that the captured Lisha had been secured by Syvalles was obtained by Nier's subordinate that she secretly sent inside the Ancient Forest.

That meant the worst situation where the hostages at both sides was killed because of both sides mutually breaking the rule had been avoided.

Therefore, if they could recover Aeryl and Grand Force which was stolen by Azure Division, Nier and Dawla would be able to make the New Kingdom indebted to them.

Of course, they would leave around half of their force here as excuse for later.

"You will only be highly evaluated by adapting to the change of situation and accomplish more than what you're ordered to do. That's logical."

In a glance Dawla looked taciturn and professional, but as the main battle asset of four great nobles' next generation, it seemed he was hiding quite the ambition in him.

He agreed with Nier and immediately organized his unit.

The Drag-Knights here were moved in order to annihilate Azure Division, but right after that—.

"Before that, we have to accomplish our original objective."

"Yeah.....they came sniffing huh, the gofer of foreign countries."

".....What? That's—"

When Nier and Dawla in their Drag-Ride along with several of their subordinates moved to enter the forest, they turned around and scowled.

Then, the surrounding was enveloped by a mysterious mist where they became unable to even see several ml ahead.

"What's this.....!? Since when this mist is——"

".....That's not it, this is metal fragments of mythrildite. I heard that one of those guys possessed that kind of special armament."

One of the subordinates muttered in bewilderment, but Dawla who was wearing EX Wyvern didn't show any change of expression.

"——Howling Roar!"

He immediately unleashed a vortex of shockwave and blew away the mist of metal fragments. Then two Divine Drag-Ride users appeared before them.

"You, you are-!?"

"That Divine Drag-Ride is....., don't tell me it's Seven Dragon Paladins'——!?"

Dawla's subordinates spontaneously yelled seeing that.

A young man with bristling blond hair and peevish face.

The Seven Dragon Paladins of Vanheim Principality, Greifer was clad in flying type Divien Drag-Ride——Cuelebre that possessed strong scale standing there.

"Haa, we got found out. Even though you tend to not want to stand out, you are really famous aren't you."

The one sighing beside him was the youngest Seven Dragon Paladins at the tender age of thirteen—a girl who represented Ymir Theocracy, Mel Gizalut.

Her platinum hair and childish feature were distinctive, but she possessed enough ability to handle a Divine Drag-Ride.

"Don't talk like it's my fault. I hid us using Mist Cypher already."

Greifer raised an exasperated voice at Mel's grumbling.

Nier and Dawla were shaken at the two's relaxed conversation while throwing them a question.

"Why are you two here when you should have returned back to your own country? Why are you two stepping into the Ancient Forest as you please?"

"Depending on your answer, you won't get away scot free from here."

"Look, they are angry. You explain to them."

"Oy, you know that I ain't that kind of diligent guy aren't you....."

Greifer muttered in detest, while Mel was smiling in delight.

"But you know, compared to the two who went over there, aren't you still better in the sense that you can still be talked with?"

"Now that you say it, that's true. —And, if I have to say something, actually.....we got a little bit of tip-off yeah..... You two."

"The two who went over there? Tip-off? Just what do you mean huh?"

Nier glared at Greifer, in response he told her with a straight face.

"The New Kingdom bunch know about the truth of Aeryl's kidnapping and the stolen Grand Force. And yet, they're lying because they fear the intervention from us foreign Drag-Knights."

"....."

Tension ran through the force in that place hearing that.

Certainly there was a gag order from Raffi regarding the incident this time.

That the cause of Aeryl and Grand Force getting kidnapped lied in the New Kingdom.

If that fact came to light, it would become an international scandal and there was a possibility that the New Kingdom would be asked for compensation.

—Presently due to the world revision from Endless, the countries all over the world considered that the war against the Lords had been taken care of safely.

On top of that the New Kingdom only said that Aeryl and the Grand Force were taken away by mysterious bandits.

"Who was it that gave the tip-off? By the way that story is a lie though."

Nier answered without letting even a hint of her agitation, but Greifer also didn't pay it any mind.

"Hee, we can hear the sound of shootout inside the forest but, why are you guys still doing something like training during this serious affair yeah? If you can answer that, then I'll talk about the reason why we came here."

".....We're the one asking question. We don't have any obligation to go along with your tomfoolery!"

Dawla raised his eyebrows and flared up at Greifer and Mel.

But, the two Seven Dragon Paladins didn't flinch, far from that they took an aggressive stance instead.

The reason why Greifer and Mel came here.

It wasn't because they had broken through the binding spell in their perception that Uroboros applied on them. They were here because of Magialca's scheme that provoked them into action just before they went back to their country.



More accurately speaking, this was the result of Aeryl as well as the Drag-Knights of Kilzrake family provoking these two.

Queen Raffi of New Kingdom was scheming an evil deed—such information was leaked to these two, but just with that the Seven Dragon Paladins who represented their respective country couldn't move.

—But, it would be a different story if they were given a glimpse of the kidnapped Aeryl and the stolen Grand Force.

At the surface they won against the Lords at the great war and obtained Avalon, but regarding the clarification of that ancient technology and the splitting of the legacy, because it would be directly related to their national strength, the leaders of each country were becoming highly strung.

They didn't know when the other would steal a march on them.

Therefore, these two who at the surface had already returned home were staying behind in the New Kingdom due to their ruler's instruction.

And then, just the other day.

After the decisive battle at the Ancient Forest had been decided, Raffi's scheme to monopolize Avalon would be carried out. Magialca leaked that information to the remaining four Seven Dragon Paladins through her aide Lolotte.

Actually, if Lux or Aeryl or Magialca went to directly meet them and repeatedly persuaded them strongly, then there was a possibility they might regain their memory.

—But, Magialca herself was in a state where she already couldn't move by herself, and Lux himself was under strict monitoring, so the best they could do was luring them to this forest.

After that there was nothing more that could be done except betting on the remaining Seven Dragon Paladins rushing to this place and recovering their memory on their own.

This strategy was attempted with that kind of judgment.

"It looks like all of us here won't back down huh. Then——"

Dawla who was clad in EX Wyrn raised his weapon a hammer, while Nier who was piloting an EX Wyvern also unsheathing a custom curved Blade.

"Great. Your side is unsheathing your weapon first. Thanks to that—we can save the time."

At the opposite side Mel readied her battle axe and smiled boldly.

"Besides, I'm convinced. As I thought there is something that we must not see here. A threat that cannot be compared with the likes of you all."

"Besides, I don't know why but, it feels like there is still something that I gotta do no matter what, something that I'm forgetting."

Mel and Greifer hadn't recalled the deathly battle that happened at Guernica.

But—even without memory, their body and soul remembered.

That they challenged an opponent that they ought to face by their own will.

How that battle still wasn't over.

"Should I say that it's nice a chance to test my skill has come? What's more the opponent is that famous Seven Dragon Paladins-sama."

Nier also responded by roughly brushing up her front hair and lifted the corner of her lips belligerently.

Thus, the battle began.





# **Chapter 5 – Awakening Time**

## Part 1

"Oi, where are you all planning to go!? I'm going to assist everyone too!"

"That's what she said, Airi. What should we do?"

At the same time when Lux and Philuffy was starting to fight.

Lisha who was rescued by Philuffy was handed to the Triad and guarded by them. They were wandering inside the forest.

"Or rather little sister, what's with that appearance? Since when you became able to pilot Drag-Ride!?"

The destination of the Triad—at an open place there Lisha reflexively raised her voice.

"Fufu, to think I'll be able to surprise Lisha-sama in the matter of Drag-Ride, anything is possible as long as one dare to take the challenge isn't it."

There she found the figure of Airi wearing a pilot suit and a Drake on top of that.

From the examination it was known that she also had high aptitude for Drag-Ride, so in a sense she should have even more talent than Lisha.

But, her stamina was low and she had difficulty with controlling Drag-Ride, so in the end she was pursuing the work as secretary. It should be like that but—.

"Airi. Please don't force yourself. I've told you so repeatedly."

Airi responded to Noct's serious expression with a gentle smile.

If Lisha's question was to be answered concisely, from a little while ago Airi was receiving the Triad's help to train wearing Drag-Ride once more.

Having said that, there was almost nothing that she could do.

Airi's skill in piloting Drag-Ride couldn't endure going through battle or making complicated movement, so she was using the Drag-Ride in a unique way.

She equipped Drake, then she focused in only using the function of barrier and the special equipments. Other functions like weapon usage or movement were all locked instead.

With that, complex and varied movement as well as physical fatigue were suppressed until the utmost limits and she succeeded in using Drag-Ride.

In other words, once she deployed her Drag-Ride, she became the person in charge of information management that wouldn't take even a single step away from her spot but—.

"Magialca-san of Seven Dragon Paladins was also using similar Divine Drag-Ride, so I tried imitating her."

"Perhaps, that woman would be angry if she hear that....."

Lisha muttered with a complicated expression toward Airi's smile.

"That's how it is, so for now please rest for a bit. Lisha-sama couldn't have any decent sleep during your imprisonment right? Your face is the same like when you were staying up all night."

"Mu..... Still, I'm worried about Haha-ue. Besides—there is also the matter of Alma."

Airi soothed down Lisha, even so Lisha also wouldn't back down.

"The matter of the little sister, is it?"

Lisha wordlessly nodded toward Noct's question.

Outwardly Alma was the captain of Azure Division and the main culprit who caused the commotion this time.

But, even so Lisha couldn't think of her little sister as simply the bad guy.

"That girl too, her hand stopped when she was about to kill me. Perhaps her grudge toward me is genuine. But, a part of the responsibility of her doing something like that also lie on me..... If there is casualty from both sides in this battle then it might become difficult to even defend her but——"

"Princess....."

"I know that I'm saying a strange thing. I also know that I'm lacking self-awareness as the princess of the New Kingdom. But, I don't want to abandon my little sister once more."

Lisha hung her head down after Sharis commented.

Perhaps she was released from her tension until now that she staggered at that place from fatigue and lack of sleep.

Airi awkwardly supported Lisha's unsteady body with her arms, then she waited for the girl to sleep.

"I will look after Lisha-sama, so the three of you, please guard the surrounding. Let's resume moving after resting for half an hour."

"Yep. Let's do that as long as no enemy come."

Tillfur said that with a relieved expression, then the three started searching the surrounding just like Airi instructed.

Airi who was left alone with Lisha looked at her sleeping face that looked vaguely pained and smiled.

"That's not a strange thing at all. After all that's how siblings are."

Airi muttered while sending transmission using Dragon Voice to a certain person.

Airi raised the temperature of the Drag-Ride she was wearing to protect Lisha from the coldness of the snow that was starting to fall and warmed her body.



(Nii-san, please be safe——)

After Celis, next it was the second successive battle with the objective of making Philuffy withdrew from the frontline.

Airi knew that Krulcifer wouldn't move too far to the front in order to maintain the battlefront of New Kingdom military. She was conveying that to Lux.

Raffi was monitoring Lux as well as Syvalles until the very last minute before this decisive battle, but in the end it seemed she was predicting that Lux was moving alone.

But, that was Raffi's miscalculation——.

No, even Lux himself didn't even have the slightest thinking of using Airi who was pretending to not know anything before this as a spy to the New Kingdom camp until just before.

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## Part 2

"Nii-san, is it okay if I ask you——about a certain matter?"

"About what?"

Last night, in the reserved inn where it was time to sleep late at night.

The guest room where Lux and Airi were staying.

The bright blue moonlight was shining into the bedroom. There Airi was talking to the sleeping Lux.

The voice that was familiar to his ear.

The face of his biological sister that was tinged with sorrow vaguely looked like a different person that made his heart jumped.

Toward the bewildered Lux, Airi quietly slipped into the blanket with her cheeks slightly blushing, and whispered.

"Shh....., be quiet. Nii-san. I'm asking Noct to watch the surrounding of the inn, so there should be no one listening."

"Why so suddenly.....? Did something, happen——"

When Lux asked uneasily, Airi placed the pillow she brought beside Lux and lied down facing the side to face Lux.

The familiar fixed stare from Airi was tinged with even more dissatisfaction than usual.

"I, heard it. When Nii-san and Aeryl-san were talking while avoiding anyone's gaze."

".....!?"

Lux couldn't hide his reaction hearing that.

This time he was acting and staying quiet not only toward people related to the New Kingdom starting from Queen Raffi, but even to everyone of the Academy, however his mask was torn off now.

But, when Airi was listening to the conversation of that time, she should have nothing but questions.

Because Airi too should be still under the binding spell from Endless toward her perception.

"If I have to speak the truth, I was unable to affirm Aeril-san's figure. But, it felt like Nii-san was talking to her so, perhaps——"

"Isn't that just your imagination? I had no intention saying such....."

Thinking really carefully, two weeks ago, at the deep level floor of Avalon at the abandoned capital Guernica, Airi was also——receiving Baptism from the trial.

In that sense there was a grounding for her to notice this world revision, but it was hard to believe that she would notice any definite out of place feeling just from listening to Lux and Aeril's conversation.

And so, Lux tried to deceive Airi to distance her from this matter but——.

"Then, is it alright if I speak loudly from now? I'll expose to everyone too that Nii-san is the mastermind of that organization in question though."

"....."

Seeing the smiling face of Airi with the shadow hanging over her eyes, Lux could only shake his head hard left and right with a pale expression.

"Then please tell me. What does Nii-san know? What is happening in this New Kingdom——"

"That's....."

"If you say that you don't want to drag me into it, then I'll get angry."

When Lux averted his eyes and shut his mouth, Airi slightly brought her face closer.

Helplessly, Lux talked about the looping three days of parade.

Although the Lords were defeated at the great battle at Avalon, the Seven Dragon Paladins were defeated by Fugil and world revision was carried out by Uroboros.

The memories of all the people were overwritten and history was corrected.

The act that the Hero of Beginning Fugil had been repeating along with Sacred Eclipse until now was currently in progress right now.

The Sacred Eclipse possessed Queen Raffi, then with that almighty power she murdered the Old Empire faction, Waybra, Prime Minister Nulph, and various other peoples in order to hide her sin of betraying the great man Count Atismata.

The members of Syvalles other than Yoruka didn't know that fact, and Lux also had no intention of telling them, but Lux knew the truth about Sacred Eclipse and Fugil, and he decided to liberate the New Kingdom from the grasp of Sacred Eclipse by himself. He told her that.

".....So, Sacred Eclipse hasn't died. And then it possessed her majesty the queen."

"Yes. I somehow realized after hearing the report from Yoruka. It seems that Sacred Eclipse is special for Fugil. Apparently it was originally made in order to save the world, but it became strange because of some kind of mistake."

The chip of storage medium that was recovered from the treasure warehouse of the Ruin Garden.

From what Aeryl said, it seemed that it was set so if several conditions were fulfilled, the data inside it could be played in Avalon's facility.

And so, if they could obtain secret information related to Avalon, wouldn't they be able to obtain a countermeasure against Uroboros and Sacred Eclipse—.

"....."

After Lux finished talking the summarized version of everything, Airi turned her face toward Lux on the pillow and silently gave him a fixed stare.

"Nii-san, you really love doing dangerous tightrope walking. How about you enter a circus troupe when you graduate the Academy?"

"No that, sorry..... That's why at the very least even if it's just Airi alone I want you to escape—"

Normally he would smile wryly at Airi's sarcasm but this time only it wasn't a situation where he could make a joke.

Now that it had come to light that Sacred Eclipse was a Ragnarok that possessed an evil side, he had to challenge Queen Raffi in order to save the New Kingdom too.

And then, thinking for in case he failed, so that everyone and Airi wouldn't get dragged in—.

"I'll say this but, Nii-san has no right to refuse okay?"

"Eh.....?"

Airi's words that she casually said to him made Lux shut his mouth.

"I will help. Until now I kept it a secret from everyone except the Triad, but if it's only for a limited use, then even I have become able to wear Drag-Ride. With that I'll support Nii-san from New Kingdom's side. As a spy—"

When Lux asked, it seemed Airi was training to be able to use Drake. She picked up on the conversation of Lux and Aeril was also thanks to that.

It seemed that Airi coincidentally wore the Drag-Ride after they finished checking the inside of the inn, so they overlooked her.

"—Tha, that's reckless!"

"It's Nii-san who's reckless right? Even so you decided to do it right? Then I'll also accompany you. Even if I die because of that, I don't really mind."

Airi stared into Lux's eyes while saying that indifferently.

It wasn't just a spontaneous idea or a temporary emotion, her face was the face of someone who had made their resolve.

"I'm not that sickly kid from seven years ago anymore you know? I can at least decide about my life or death by myself. If this is what Nii-san is going to do, then I'll also do so."

"——"

"Nii-san too please try to put yourself in my position if I have to live in a world where Nii-san is dead. If you don't want to hurt me, then please stop fighting right away. Nii-san want to keep up with your selfishness, but then my selfishness is no good? Don't you think that's unfair?"

"Airi....."

He couldn't find any words to reply to that.

But, this wasn't a problem of logic.

"No, but, as I thought, it's no good! Such thing——"

Emotionally, he was unable to choose an option where his little sister, his only biological family, Airi might become sacrifice.

"—Nii-san. Will you listen to my dream when I was a child?"

Lux was going to appeal to Airi desperately, but Airi suddenly smiled.

"After I graduate from the Academy, I will become independent as a civil official and go to meet up with Nii-san. I want our criminal collar to be taken off, no.....even if we don't actually receive any pardon, I want the two of us to live together as family again."

"....."

"I wanted to become able to stay together with Nii-san again. Is it no good for me to have this kind of dream? Can't I risk my life for the sake of raising the possibility of Nii-san going back alive even if only slightly?"

Lux was unable to say anything hearing that earnest pleading.

His little sister who was given criminal status like him.

Lux was worrying for her all this time as an existence that he had to protect, but she was working hard in order to become able to protect Lux too.

He learned for the first time that she was working hard until now dreaming to be together with him.

"—You know, I actually didn't want to say something like this."

Even in the very dim light from the moonlight shining in, it felt like he could see Airi's face that was blushing from embarrassment.

This was Airi after all, surely she was feeling embarrassed.

She was secretly working hard all the time in order to make her dream come true.

While she had no talent to fight as Drag-Knight, she did the best she could in order to protect Lux.

His heart felt constricted when he thought of Airi's feeling.

"But, if Nii-san die, I won't be able to say this anymore. So I said it while I can. Is there something that Nii-san want to say to me?"

"Sorry, Airi..... I——"

When Lux looked down and said that, Airi brought her body even closer on the bed.

".....It's fine. It's not that I want to receive help from Nii-san. I want to become the one who can help Nii-san this time. That's all there is to it."

He couldn't stop her anymore.

Because he realized that just like how he was thinking of Airi, she was also thinking of him.

"Hey, Nii-san. Can I get a bit closer? Just like when we were children."

"Yeah."

Airi buried her face on Lux's chest so that her skin could stick close on him through the clothes.

The nostalgic scent and warmth, and the beating of the heart were directly conveyed.

Their hearts were connected as one and they whispered about the strategy before falling asleep at the end.

.



## Part 3

And then now—.

Airi who was clad in a Drake guarded Lisha together with the Triad while thinking.

Lisha being taken back by the New Kingdom camp was painful, Airi who was acting together with the Triad was involved with protecting Lisha. In a sense it should be said as convenient.

In their position, originally they should bring Lisha right away to Queen Raffi, but Airi intentionally didn't do that.

If Raffi learned that Lisha was rescued from being hostage, she would surely kill Alma and took every measure to bring Lux down.

They shouldn't bring Lisha back yet in order to prevent that too.

No—Lisha couldn't be brought back until Lux accomplished the objective of infiltrating Avalon's Archive, the facility for playing the storage medium that they obtained.

She would continue to shelter Lisha while evasively deceiving her together with the Triad who didn't know anything about the situation.

That was the best action that Airi should take right now.

She had confirmed that Lux along with Aeryl had activated the production plant of Avalon and released the Abysses.

If the Azure Division members in standby used horn flutes and controlled the swarm of Abysses that were liberated from the plant, their insufficient battle strength would be supplemented and it became possible to buy time.

(Even so, it feels like death is really near.....)

Airi was feeling the wet sensation of cold sweat beneath her pilot suit while watching the surrounding with her radar.

(I should be able to buy quite a lot of time if I continue like this! Nii-san, please finish this while you can.)

Sooner or later Raffi would notice the existence of traitor in their midst.

The problem was whether she would be able to drag the time until that happened.

"I finally find you. The traitor who is leaking the information of New Kingdom——"

But, Raffi surpassed Airi's expectation and already sent her trump card the Automata. She didn't notice that the evil clutches already approached until right beside her.

The deadline was approaching second by second.

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## Part 4

—\*IIIIiiiiIIII!\*

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The discordant sound of the Abyss controlling horn flute was resounding at the southwest of the Ancient Forest.

A lot of Abysses were transferred to outside the Cocoon, one of Avalon's facilities. With that the strategy of controlling the enemy's Abysses just like that became possible.

With this Azure Division's battle strength that was greatly inferior on the whole could push back at the New Kingdom camp and sowed chaos.

For several dozen minutes from now would be the time that decided victory or defeat.

[—Lux-kun! Over here!]

".....-!?"

Lux received the instruction from Aeryl who was flying ahead to the north and he began moving.

He pretended to slash at Philuffy and Typhon. He mixed in feint while circling around in an arc and chased behind Aeryl.

Lisha who was taken back was entrusted to Airi and the Triad, with that it became possible to continue the plan.

(It's not coincidence that Airi and others are here. We were able to cope because she learned the formation of the New Kingdom camp beforehand!)

In the end thanks to Airi's cooperation Lux ended up saved in this phase.

In that case, he wanted to win.

He wanted to make this plan a success to respond to his little sister's feeling who wanted to save Lux even if she had to put herself in danger.

With that feeling in his heart, he headed to Avalon's Archive—the place where all information was stored that was located underground this place in full speed.

Most likely Philuffy had also received strengthening by Baptism just like Celis. It would be foolish to clash against her head-on.

If Philuffy used the Abyss factor inside her body, it would put a great burden on her body.

Fortunately, the movement of Typhon that was a huge land battle type Divine Drag-Ride was limited this deep inside the forest.

(I'll be able to get away if I can escape to the sky!)

The instant he flew to the sky with that conviction, he felt something was out of place.

Right after that, Typhon that jumped vertically from the ground until the height of ten-odd ml fired an anchor from its armor.

"Wha-!?"

"You won't get away, you know?"

A thick steel wire entangled Bahamut's armored leg and completely restrained it.

Lux along with the armor he wore swooped down from getting pulled by the Drag-Ride's tremendous strength.

[What's, that—!?!]

Aeril who turned around also opened her eyes wide in surprise.

The form of Typhon that Philuffy was wearing had turned into different shape than before.

There were countless protuberances that looked like curved blade on her shoulders and back. In addition the armors covering her hands and legs were reinforced further, enlarging Typhon that was already a large type originally to become even bigger.

That shape that looked similar like Over Unit, putting even more armor above the armor that Lisha developed astonished Lux.

And then, the presence of Philuffy herself also became empty. There was no light in her eyes.

[The reason is unclear but the possession target, this woman doesn't recognize the guy's true identity. But it will be faster if I'm direct control anyway. This Divine Drag-Ride Python and El Fajura will return the debt from the other day.]

"—!?"

The voice of Automata whose shape or shadow couldn't be seen came from the armor Philuffy was wearing.

El Fajura.

The Gear Leader of Gigas who once attacked the New Kingdom together with the Lord Hayes.

She possessed the power to control other person's Drag-Ride using her own clone that was created from nanomachines.

In addition she was also operating behind the scenes at the looping parade the other day. She murdered the noble called Waybra under Raffi's order.

But, till the end she was only piloting Drag-Ride. She should be unable to control other person but—.

(Is she under the effect of Iblis's mental pollution just like Celis-senpai? No, until just now Philuffy didn't show any strange sign.)

One of Lux's armored leg was still restrained by Pile Anchor while he was flying in low altitude. A voice from Aeryl came.

"Lux-kun! El Fajura's Divine Drag-Ride Python is sticking on Philuffy-san's Typhon. It possesses Divine Raiment that takes hold of other Drag-Ride's armor and misdirect the pilot's mind!"

Because Lux's appearance was witnessed by the Automata, Aeryl also used her real voice to tell him of the danger.

"Kuh.....!?"

The enemy wasn't controlling Philuffy's own body, but she was taking possession of the Drag-Ride and interfered with her mind through it.

Lux recalled last time when Philuffy was controlled by Hayes and he went tense.

At this time it didn't look like she was using Ragnarok's strength so that was the only silver lining but—.

".....Ei"

But, the next moment.

A danger that dispersed even such consideration attacked Lux.

Typhon skated and got out of the area crowded with trees, then right after that it pulled the restrained Bahamut right to its side.

"-!?"

He had fought Philuffy several times in mock battle, so he was on guard against being pulled by Pile Anchor.

But, the place where he was pulled at was a large rock that was between Philuffy and Lux.

(What, in the world!?)

The trees clustering together were blocking the view, so he made light of the opponent thinking that the other side would also find it hard to confirm his action, but it was a tremendous miscalculation.

It was Lux who got the trees used as blinder against him. At this rate he would be smashed on the rock.

(I'm being pulled so I can't dodge!? My armor will be scattered if I'm smashed there!)

He realized that there was only one option for him in front of the large rock before him.

"—Recoil Burst!"

He quickly touched the Sword Device on his waist and simultaneously gave conflicting commands from two type of control.

He intentionally caused the Drag-Ride to rampage from the contradiction of orders, bringing a destructive power that was several times the usual to destroy the rock.

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—\*ZU-, DOOooON!\*

.

At the same time with the secret technique's execution, the impact shook the surrounding trees and blew away their leaves.

He was worried if Philuffy who was at the other side got hit by the scattered rock fragments, but his anxiety came in a different shape.

"I don't know who you are but, I understand if it's that Divine Drag-Ride."

"—!?"

Philuffy predicted that Lux would destroy the rock and jumped ahead. She got away from the opposite end of the wire that was connecting her and Lux, then she greatly pulled back her right armored arm in order to hit Lux who had just finished executing his secret technique.

Typhon's special armament that was installed inside the armored arm would directly send energy into the captured target and exploded it.

It was clear even from afar that enough energy for that had been gathered.

(Damn it!)

He was completely outwitted.

He had no intention of underestimating Philuffy's strength, but Lux's assumption was easily surpassed.

(I won't make it in time. The time to recover Bahamut's posture—there's no time!)

Typhon's arm approached from in front of him.

Lux's consciousness was stretching the instant into several second with his own defeat before his eyes, it was then,

Aeril who came from the side immediately blew away Lux to the side with Howling Roar.

\*GO-.....DOoNN!\*

Right after that, the scorching hot torrent from Biting Flare crushed the empty air.



Lux barely escaped the predicament due to Aeryl's quick wit, but he witnessed something strange in that instant.

Philuffy couldn't neutralize the impact of the explosion and her balance crumbled—, no, she stood on one leg as pivot and used the momentum of the recoil to launch a spinning kick.

".....-!?"

Lux felt doubtful why she exploded the Biting Flare even though he didn't catch Lux, but that in itself was a series of attacking action.

Philuffy's kick that was using the hand-to-hand combat technique learned from Magialca into her Drag-Ride piloting hit Aeryl who came nearby. A part of her armor was smashed and she was sent flying.

".....U-, AAaaAH!"

Although she was directly hit by the kick, Zahhak's armor wasn't dispelled, but most likely Aeryl was already unable to fight properly with that.

Perhaps it was cheap as compensation to save Lux's life, but from the perspective of the battle situation they were cornered into an overwhelming disadvantage with this.

[What's the meaning of this? The movement just now.....is completely Philuffy's movement. Is she not completely controlled?]

Lux used Dragon Voice to voice his question, then Aeryl immediately responded with a tense voice.

[That.....is, Philuffy-san herself. Cough.....! It's not that her mind is taken over, she is being made to misrecognize the opponent she fight. In other words, she is directing her full strength toward you, based on her own tactics..... Quickly run away, Lux-kun. The current us—aren't her match!]

Aeryl was blown away, but she was talking with pain coloring her voice.

Honestly speaking this was unexpected.

It was reassuring when she was fighting as a member of Syvalles—as his comrade, but to think that she would be this powerful as enemy.

(No—, should I say that she has become this strong.....)

Lux was struck with admiration.

This was incomparable with half a year ago when he fought the brainwashed Philuffy at Ries Island.

In order to defeat the numerous powerful enemies, Philuffy was also polishing her fang like the other girls.

[Lux, kun..... Run, shake her off and head to the Archive. If you don't! You'll be defeated.....!]

Perhaps because she had just attacked with all her strength, as expected even Philuffy's movement to give chase was dulled.

There was the armor strengthening by Python, but he would be able to shake her off if he escaped in full speed for several seconds.

But—.

(Your majesty Raffi, is this also your plan?)

Even if his assumption that she was realizing his true identity, this was the first time for an enemy to understand Lux's true nature this far.

Not only she had been told about the way he fought from the report more than anyone else, she was also understanding the human called Lux from the viewpoint of a ruler.

[Lux.....kun?]

Lux drove Bahamut toward the road that Aeryl showed—the northeast of Ancient Forest where the Archive was located.

But, he wasn't using his maximum speed. It was a speed that Typhon could barely follow.

If it was Philuffy who was powered up by the parasitic armor Python, she would be able to follow after Lux without problem.

(Even knowing that, why?)

Aeril who was feeling puzzled was also guessing the reason why Raffi chose Philuffy as the second assassin after Celis.

(I see..... Queen Raffi, she know, that Lux-kun cannot escape.....)

The most important connection of Lux who once saved her.

Exactly because he was risking his life to protect everyone that he was unable to do anything like abandoning the controlled Philuffy.

He planned to lure them to Archive in order to destroy El Fajura and Python.

But, that was a really dangerous gamble.

With Philuffy's current strength, there was no guarantee that Lux would win even if he faced her with all his might.

And then, on the other hand Philuffy who was chasing Lux was also persisting to carry out a single will within her hazy mind.

(My head is dizzy. But, if I don't fight.....)

Python that was controlled by El Fajura acted as parasite and her will was manipulated.

It wasn't mind control, but the direction of her mind—the foundational principle of her action, about what she should do was misdirected.

Due to Baptism using Ruin's device that was called the Coffin, Philuffy obtained strength that was suited to her characteristic in exchange of the

danger.

It was the path she chose in order to become the strength of her important person, in order to not make him sad.

She succeeded in that and continued fighting for a certain objective.

When she was a child, Philuffy built up herself to not cry in order to protect her family who was living in sadness because of their mother's death.

Because everyone will be even sadder if she showed them her sad self.

However, that boy noticed that way of living of Philuffy and directed his straightforward kindness to her.

He was awkward—able to be kind to anyone. But in exchange he was unable to accept other people's good will from the front.

.....He was like her, she thought.

Thinking that, she became happy.

If that kind person became able to like himself more, if he could become happy, then surely she herself would also feel happy. She thought that.

For the sake of protecting him, and staying at his side.

Philuffy vowed under Magialca, that she would fight for that sake.

(That's why, I have to. With this strength, I'll.....-chan, protect)

.

"—Tei"

The girl's voice sounded somewhat stupid.

At the same time, \*GAUNN!\* pursuing wire was fired from Typhon's armored shoulder.

".....Kuh!"

Lux was flying horizontally with the ground at the height of 5, 6 ml. The tip of the wire approached at his back wings with a tremendous speed like a bullet. Lux twisted his body along with his armor to evade.

Typhon's Pile Anchor was certainly powerful, but it could only aim at Lux in a straight line in a situation where there was no obstacle.

And then once it missed Lux, it was impossible to attack Lux again until the wire was reeled back.

Of course there was more than one anchor so it was necessary to be careful but—,

(I can do this! If I'm paying attention to the anchors that are fired from below, they can be dodged!)

Lux was convinced. He continuously evaded the tips of the anchors that were fired rapidly.

While the New Kingdom military and Azure Division that was controlling Abyss with horn flute were battling at the surrounding slight distance away, they moved for several minutes approaching the destination. It was then.

\*Bishii-!\*

"-.....!?"

Lux was suddenly receiving impact as though he was hit with a hip from the side and felt shocked.

(How? Even though I should have dodged the Pile Anchor!?)

Bahamut's frame was shaken by the impact and its flying trajectory greatly diverted.

Lux was feeling shocked by the unexpected attack while barely moving to recover his balance. There he received even more hit from wires in the same way.

"This is, she is firing anchors at where I'm flying, then she reeled them in while using them like whip!?"

Philuffy took an attack method of firing wire from her right shoulder, then her armored arm grabbed the wire and used it like whip to strike at Lux.

To do that she intentionally fired several times at trajectory that wouldn't hit Bahamut and took Lux by surprise.

Furthermore, it was already too late when he noticed.

Philuffy was also measuring the timing. He received whip strikes continuously.

The destructive power of the attack itself was low, but his speed was greatly declining because his back wings were hit. He was entered into the firing range where Typhon could reach him with its driving speed.

"Ei"

\*DON-\*, along with a step on the ground that was like explosion, Typhon leaped and lifted up its huge armored arms that were joined together.

Those arms that were formed into a hammer were going to strike Bahamut's back. In that instant Lux accelerated with all his might.

Archive that was the destination was right below. Aerial had gone ahead and waited for Lux's arrival there.

There was arrangement prepared so the moment Lux landed on the ground, they would be transported into Archive to escape. But—.

"—!?"

"You won't, get away."

Philuffy also increased her attack precision further.

Just like capturing a bird by throwing a rock that was tied with rope, she fired wire at the same time when swinging both her arms just now and entangled Lux's armor with Pile Anchor.

In addition she also fired anchor into the landing place to reel in Typhon itself toward the ground.

"Lux-kun! Unfasten that wire! At this rate—"

"No, it's fine! We'll accomplish our objective in the Archive and settle this fight at the same time like this!"

Lux's aim from the beginning wasn't to escape from Philuffy.

He planned to lead her into a part of Avalon—the underground facility Archive and there he would destroy El Fajura and Python.

Even if he would become exhausted from this fight, he couldn't avoid it.

Lux decided to daringly get on Queen Raffi's intention.

—\*KIIN\*. Faint light rose in round shape, enveloping Lux, Aerial, and Philuffy.

After experiencing the weightless sensation for several seconds, the scenery of the surrounding changed.

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## Part 5

"—Communication from Gear Leader El Fajura. She is in the middle of fighting Lux Arcadia as well as Aeryl vi Arcadia. The place is the Archive northeast from here."

The Automata Arshalia who was standing beside Raffi received a transmission from her subordinate El Fajura and grasped the situation.

But, Raffi didn't look surprised at all. Her face seemed to say that she had predicted it from the beginning.

"So it's just as I thought. I don't understand how he was deceiving other people's eyes until now though."

"Most likely they are using the Divine Raiment of Zahhak isn't it?"

Divine Raiment Brain Hack made it possible to steal a specific memory from the target.

If the awareness toward the existence called Lux was erased, whether Lux came and went from the inn and no matter what he did somewhere else, no one would be able to realize that it was Lux.

But, if his very existence was erased, it would become clear from the unnaturalness that he was using Brain Hack.

Therefore Lux only hid his true identity while creating the transient true image that was Azure Division.

It was the same like how Fugil once made use of Lux's existence to accomplish the revolution that destroyed the Old Empire.

"Well, it will be alright if we leave it to Philuffy. He had just fight seriously against Celistia, so surely he don't have the spare strength to win against her—even in the unlikely chance that he actually defeat her, he will be exhausted and unable to fight well. What's left is to have the Automata



deal with his little sister who seems to be the traitor and pull down the curtain. Are you alright with that, Fugil?"

"Why are you asking me for permission? You can do as you please."

Fugil was positioned as a sentry at the central of Avalon, but with Lux's position becoming clear, Raffi called him back to his side.

"It's so that I don't become the world's enemy—which consequently will turn me into your enemy. I believe that the Lord Listelka too surely died because of that. So I have to meet your expectation as much as possible."

".....There is no risk of that at this point of time. What you're doing is being considered as simply dealing with the enemy of the New Kingdom. In regard of Syvalles too, you're only sending them keeping in mind the possibility of the unlikely chance that foolish little brother cannot be killed."

"Fufu, I'm relieved to hear that. Then, is it alright for me to move too any time now? An emergency report came from my subordinates."

Because a great number of Abysses that were transferred out from the underground production plant were controlled by horn flute, the New Kingdom army was put into disadvantage.

Triad and Airi were guarding Lisha while hiding and moving.

Krulcifer was continuing to make a good showing by herself against the large swarm of Abysses, but against such number she was unable to defeat them all and the frontline was being pushed back.

"Well then, I'll leave Alma in your hand, Re Plica."

"Roger desu. I will do my best in case anything happen desu."

Raffi gave an order to the Gear Leader of Moon who possessed mechanical fox ears, Re Plica.

In preparation of the case of Lux getting away, she readied this plan for even more blow toward him where an Automata was watching over Alma while depending on the situation, she would be used as hostage to bring down Lux.

"....."

Alma was being tied up and couldn't say anything.

In this situation there was already nothing that she could do except to pray for Lux's safety.

"Now then."

At the same time with her muttering, \*paki paki\* the air around Raffi was freezing.

The strongest Sacred Eclipse that combined all the powers of seven Ragnaroks, it would carry out its objective of bringing salvation to the person it was possessing and before long it would expand its strength to the maximum.

After doing that, it would devour all the thought and flesh of the person it was fused with and rampaged.

It would evolve into great calamity that destroyed everything to nothing. Raffi didn't know about that reality.

She would last, perhaps for several months.

Or perhaps in faster case Raffi would lose her ego as human in the course of several weeks before transforming into calamity.

When the history reached the last stop, Fugil would use Uroboros and Avalon and reset everything.

Using world revision, he would make people's memory to forget everything about the Ruins.

And then—someone would discover the Ruins once more, and everything would repeat.

That was the truth of Sacred Eclipse, the prologue that would lead to world destruction.

"Should I go out? No.....it's fine, I'll leave it to you."

".....? That's unusual, to think you would take the initiative to move."

"....."

Raffi didn't realize the true meaning behind Fugil's suggestion.

How Fugil didn't wish to see her wretched figure when she greedily devoured the great amount of Abysses, the distorted side of Sacred Eclipse.

"Then, I'll leave this place to you. I'll go to rampage for a bit."

Right after that, wings grew from the young figure of the queen and she flew away.

And then, a curbstomp was started.

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## Part 6

"This place, where is——?"

At that time, Lux and others who were transferred to the information management facility the Archive were placed in a mysterious situation.

The whole surrounding was jet black darkness.

Inside it there were only their figures without wearing Drag-Ride floating along with a faint light.

They could only stir their body slightly.

"Calm down Lux-kun. The progression of time that we're experiencing right now dozens of times faster than reality. That's why you won't get tired even if you keep wearing Bahamut. Right now the content of the information storage medium we found in the Garden is being activated."

Apparently the facility of Avalon called Archive was directly interfering with their brain. It seemed that it was constructed so that people could obtain information in a short time.

It seemed that Philuffy was also watching this from nearby, but it was unclear whether she was bewildered or simply being her usual self, she was staring vacantly at empty air with her expressionless face.

A dark room with only their consciousness where they didn't even know up and down.

At the center, a silhouette with the same appearance like the Automata called Arshalia was existing.

Silver hair and grey eyes.

She was a girl with lovely long hair wearing luxurious pure white dress.

She opened her eyes as though noticing the existence of Lux and others, then she smiled and bowed.

"Welcome to the Archive. I welcome the arrival of the three of you."

"You are.....?"

Lux who only existed as consciousness here spontaneously asked.

Right after that he felt exasperated at himself who was talking to information storage medium, but unexpectedly a reply came back.

"My name is Arshalia. I was an imperial princess of Arcadia Empire in the past. Using the technology that was brought about by the Xfer, I was the one who recreated the Ruins. With my position perhaps I could be called as the <sup>Creator</sup> Lord."

".....!? Then, that Automata who is the Gear Leader of Avalon, she is——"

When Aeryl who was an imperial family member that was similarly called as the Lord asked the question, the girl's hologram nodded.

"Yes. I created it to imitate my appearance. But, it cannot be said that she is projecting my consciousness. She is just an artificial intelligence—in short she is a pseudo personality that was created artificially, she is unrelated with me. In that sense this me is also the same like that but..... what we are remembering is different."

"....."

Even the ancient technology of the Ruins and Avalon until now were overwhelming, but they were still bewildered with the appearance of the existence called Arshalia they were facing.

But, Lux immediately pulled himself together and asked.

"What do you know? No, regarding Avalon and the way to defeat Sacred Eclipse.....and the transforming Drag-Ride Uroboros——can you teach us what you know about those?"

".....Very well. All of you are people who arrived here after surmounting all difficulties. You have enough qualification to know. The beginning of everything was more than a thousand years ago——it began from the encounter of me and him."

"Him.....?"

Aeril made a dubious face, but Lux had an idea about it.

"Fugil Arcadia huh....."

"Yes....."







Arshalia nodded at Lux's muttering.

The expression of the girl who were projected in this false image contained gentleness somewhere within, at the same time it also gave a hint of loneliness.

"You must have known if you had reached the central of Avalon, but Arcadia Empire at our time was in the middle of wars that were like hell."

"....."

Avalon's deep level floor.

Lux and others also knew about that after watching the past recording that was projected in the abandoned capital Guernica.

Arcadia Empire that ruled over the world soon leaned into a government for the sake of the royalty and titled nobility. In the end for the sake of refining Elixir with even higher purity—for the sake of strengthening their own talent, lifespan, and physical body, they apprehended the population that were weaker than them and turned them into raw material.

That became the origin that caused the rebellion. The group that became the center of the rebellion was called the clan of traitor. The people who became the ancestor of the Arcadia Empire of Lux's time.

That was how Lux and Aeril understood it but—.

"At that time, the leader of the resistance who stole the Drag-Ride that was exclusive for royalty and titled nobility was a blood relative with the highest aptitude for Drag-Ride even among the Arcadia bloodline."

".....!?"

Lux gasped and held his breath the moment he was told that.

Why was Lux and Airi's aptitude for Drag-Ride was abnormally high? That was because they were descended from the same bloodline with Fugil.

"I who was the imperial princess, and Fugil who was a child of a member of the clan of traitor. One day I accidentally saw Fugil fighting to protect the cats and dogs that were tortured by people to clear their stress."

Arshalia's projection silently looked down and began to talk.

Her detailed gestures weren't just some imitation. It looked like she was a real human girl.

"I was taught that the clan of traitor is evil since the time I possessed awareness. I had the talent to understand the technology of <sup>Key's Supervisor</sup> Xfer who cooperated with me and put it into practice. Thanks to that I obtained a great authority even among my sisters the other imperial princesses. But my relatives were only thinking to use the technology of Drag-Ride and Ruins to enrich themselves. Even I got sick of them."

"Then, because of that——"

When Lux muttered in a small voice, Arshalia opened her eyes and smiled to him.

"Yes, originally we were in the position to hate each other, but I obtained a conviction when I saw Fugil at that time. That there is no way the clan of traitor is an evil existence from their birth. That it's nothing more than a convenient sense of values created for someone's convenience——. I began to think, if I can walk together with Fugil in a path to save all of them without killing anyone."

"....."

Aeril who listened to the story made a meek expression without making even a single twitch.

Most likely the image of them the Lords were overlapping with this artificial personality of Arshalia.

Similar conflict was occurring at the era of Listelka and others. When they woke up from the long sleep at this era, they attempted to dispose all

of the people in authority from all countries.

Among them it was only Aeril alone who chose the path of coexistence with the people of this era.

"Things were going really well for both of us. Thinking back now we were also conceited back then but, we were blessed with talent and luck. I used the technology of Ruins and developed new conception and equipment. Fugil would use them and removed any danger for me. He possessed strength as Drag-Knight that was greater than anyone, and that strength bloomed in the middle of battles."

Arshalia placed her hands on her chest and continued talking about the past.

How she was correcting the distortions of the world one by one together with Fugil.

How they subjugated the chief vassals who were committing terrible injustice.

How they stopped a weapon that ran amok after a modification.

How they brought down the faction that attempted to assassinate Arshalia.

How they disguised themselves as the resistance and annihilated a group that was devoted to inhumanity.

How they left the management of the Ruin to the Automatons that were called Gear Leader.

How she developed various new Drag-Rides.

Because of the conflicts it was unavoidable that the conclusion was bloody, but the situation was becoming peaceful little by little.

"I, fell in love with him. He had been living in an unfortunate environment all the time since his childhood, so he wouldn't open his heart

to me who was an imperial princess of Arcadia, even so I believed that perhaps, he held the same feeling deep down."

—'I want to save this world.'

They wanted to get closer to a world where people wouldn't meet an unreasonable experience because of other people.

With such feeling at the bottom of their heart, the two cooperated and advanced forward.

"—But, even amidst that, the conflict wouldn't die down. No, the more the conflicts were prolonged..... The more cornered they are, people will sacrifice various things, they will not be concerned with appearances anymore, and so hatred was growing even more violent."

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A father who put a bomb inside his own daughter and sold her to a noble to take revenge.

The imperial family who captured a messenger who approached for peace and dissected him alive to be raw material for Elixir.

A greedy merchant who schemed to obtain great profit maneuvered by selling weapon to both sides and fanned up their respective anger.

A researcher indiscriminately scattered fierce poison that wouldn't really kill but inflicted a long suffering in the hope that the war would stagnate, but it was the innocent people who were suffering the most from it.

.

"I and Fugil advanced forward one step on a time.....we defeated enemies, but we witnessed sorrowful and cruel reality. We saw the gruesome act of human that was like demon repeatedly and harbored doubt. Could it be that the true nature of human—, that we the Arcadia clan are an existence that is like dirty demon? I was scolded by Fugil though. He

said [If you gave an answer like that, then what I've done until now was meaningless then]."

"....."

The era of Old Empire where the common masses were suffering from oppression and discrimination by the people in authority.

The counterattack from the common masses that were filled with deeply held resentment.

The closing years of the ancient empire must be even more terrible than the past that Lux had experienced.

During that hellish seven years, the two of them resisted, they encouraged themselves that fought while living together. Arshalia eloquently talked about their history.

All of this didn't even take several seconds in the real time, but inside their consciousness it felt like dozens of minutes had passed, and yet—it didn't feel long.

The tale of the ancient time where the wars, the people's malignancy had arrived to the extreme.

But, that battle that felt to be endless was heading to the end due to Fugil's hard fighting.

"Fugil was amazing. At the beginning his skill didn't reach to that extent but, he never stopped working hard, no matter what kind of hardship come he would endure and surpassed it, and he became strong. I was encouraged seeing him. A hero who won't abandon what is right. I administered Elixir to him every time he is in the verge of death, but at that time I noticed that a mutation was occurring."

"Mutation?"

Lux tilted his head while making a conjecture inside his heart.

"Yes, his body.....the brake inside his brain transformed. Originally a human will die if they have Elixir administered to them in certain amount, but he surpassed the limit of maximum permissible dosage and became able to continue to live."

"I can't believe it, he didn't sleep in a pod like us—he became an immortal?"

When Aeril asked that in bewilderment, Arshalia wordlessly nodded.

"There is also that, but the me at that time thought of something different. We destroyed the last great evil, and the world should have become peaceful. But, the sadness and hatred that were nesting inside the hearts of the people throughout the long period didn't vanish."

After the war ended after a fashion and time passed, the new sparks of conflict were starting to smolder from each camp. When they tried to stop that, it burned even hotter instead.

The royalty and nobility wished to take back their wealthy life from before once more and subjugated the common masses, while the population who were oppressed until now wouldn't be satisfied until they paid back their oppressors even more than what had been done to them.

"I was worried. Even when I and Fugil desperately tried to reorganize the imperial rule, they only kept disputing selfishly. They kept hurting the weak, and before long when they obtained strength they ran riot once more. Thinking of how to sever that kind of endlessly continuing negative spiral, I immersed myself into a certain research before long."

—If only the people could be freed from their hatred, from the history of fighting until now.

If it became no good no matter what was done, if everything could be forgotten and reset.

"Endless..... Done by resonating the seven Ruins. The world revision.....is it"

"So you know that much. ....Exactly."

Arshalia turned her face toward Lux who slipped out those words.

transforming Drag-Ride

"The Artifact Uroboros that possessed the greatest and strongest ability. It activated the seven Ruins simultaneously, revised the people's memory, and erased the history of hatred. But, because Uroboros that I created put a burden that is equal to more than ten Divine Drag-Ride to the user, at first even Fugil couldn't use it well."

Therefore, Fugil stemmed the disputes that were happening everywhere while at the same time he was also doing training to be able to handle Uroboros. Time of several years flowed.

On the other hand, Arshalia also started researching a system to save the world—the new humanoid Ragnarok, and named it Sacred Eclipse.

It detected human's heart, and it was equipped with the system that was able to project the heart. It would respond to the scream of people seeking to be saved, made the judgment, and brought salvation to anyone.

Fugil used Uroboros and Arshalia used Sacred Eclipse to guide the world correctly.

The Hero of Beginning and the Goddess of Salvation.

The two who were blessed with genius talent and never be negligent in constantly working hard were called like that. They became the star of hope for the people who were wishing for peace.

"But, there an accident happened. In order to possess a body that can control Uroboros and in order to heal the wound that he obtained from a certain battle, Fugil got a great amount of Elixir administered into him and he fell into a long sleep. During that time a poison was mixed into Sacred Eclipse that was almost finished."

"Poison.....you said?"

Lux made a dubious face hearing Arshalia's somber murmur.

The girl fell silent, but before she resumed her story, the talk was suddenly interrupted.

.

—\*Pishi-!\*

.

"Tsu.....!?"

The dark world was smashed and the original shape of the Archive's interior was projected to the sight of Lux and others.

The situation of the conversation with Arshalia until now completely changed. Philuffy and Typhon attacked at Lux.

"System interference finished the information gathering of the subjugation target is obstructed and along with it—erasing the target."

"El Fajura!? Was it your doing that the record's reading was rescinded!?"

When they realized there was an Automata inside the Archive.

A girl who was wearing a pilot suit in addition of mechanical ears growing from her head that looked like feather.

She was expressionless like a mask the same with when he faced her in the past, but this time only she looked different.

From the Automata who originally would only accomplish the work that she was ordered to do mechanically, he felt like a clear hostility was emitted from her.

El Fajura didn't respond to Aeryl's yell.



She only came slashing with EX Wyvern she was wearing as though to express the emotion of anger.

Aeril's face when she immediately blocked it with her Blade showed shock.

"Wha.....!?"

"Lord's betrayal is reconfirmed—moving to elimination act."

For some reason Aeril couldn't see the Blade that El Fajura held.

And yet, she was receiving the sensation as though they were crossing swords.

Most likely it was a type of rare armament. It must had the effect to change the blade to be transparent.

"The likes of you shouldn't dare to obtain information from master's memory. Don't ask about the right and wrong of the Sacred Eclipse. This is what you cursed humans began. The negative spiral of wishing only for your own prosperity."

".....!?"

The Automata that should be persisting only in doing their role as tool until now was—expressing something that was like an emotion. Lux was even more surprised when it was El Fajura who doing it when even among the Automata she was the one giving off a quiet impression.

Even her usual peculiar tone was starting to change into something gruff.

But, right now they had no time to split their focus for something like that.

At Lux's side he was also being pressed by Philuffy and Typhon. She was unleashing an attack that was like surging waves.

"—Ei"

She unleashed punches and kicks with her huge armor that pierced through the air along with the driving sound.

Each of Philuffy's strike that moved every part of the Drag-Ride's frame lithely with the weight of the Divine Drag-Ride put behind it was containing sure-kill destructive power.

Even if right now he was wearing Bahamut, it would be over if he was directly hit.

In addition this Typhon was also wearing the reinforcement armor that was brought about by El Fajura's Divine Drag-Ride.

"Philuffy-san! Open your eyes! He is Lux-kun!! Zahhak's Divine Raiment is already dispelled!"

Aeril called out to Philuffy seeing Lux being pressured by the overwhelming power.

But, El Fajura's main body slashed at Aeril with the Blade of her EX Wyvern while scoffing at Aeril's words.

"—It's pointless. The hallucination in her perception from my Python wouldn't be dispelled right away even if I died. She won't stop as long as you don't run away from this place. I also have no intention to let you get away."

"......-!? Ku!"

Aeril was pushed back by the unseen Blade the EX Wyvern was wielding and she alongwith Zahhak backed away.

She didn't have stamina left because she was continuously using her Divine Raiment in order to deceive the eyes of the New Kingdom camp.

In addition the Automata that was the fusion of human and machine was able to interfere directly with the Drag-Ride without even needing mind control operation or body control operation.

Therefore there was no time lag in her piloting and it was possible her to move smoother than the average Drag-Knight.

But, it wasn't just about simple advantageous and disadvantageous conditions, El Fajura was pressuring Aeryl with her vigor.

Aeryl was pressured by the Automata that shouldn't have anything like a soul and was unable to grasp any starting point for counterattacking.

"Because you cursed humans needlessly got involved, master's dream was dirtied. I won't allow you bastards to peek at her memory."

"Kuh! U.....!?"

Aeryl was desperately blocking the unseen slashes but the sharpness of the sword's trajectory was gradually increasing.

"How!? Why is an Automata's attack getting stronger?"

It was a reaction as a Lord who knew about the system that was incorporated in the Ruins.

Automata who possessed artificial intelligence was able to always display the very best performance as long as they were given scrupulous maintenance.

However on the other hand, because they would loyally follow the perfected action, originally they wouldn't be able to display more power than what they originally had.

And yet—.

"Don't look down on Arshalia-sama. I can analyze your movement and aim for even further optimization. Don't you underestimate my devotion!"

"Uaaah!?"

At the next moment, the Blades lunged forward with feint mixed in and the attacks crossed.

Zahhak and EX Wyvern each pierced the other's barrier. The blade's tip pierced the flesh shoulder.

On the other hand El Fajura also had her Automata arm cut down, but her face didn't even twitch.

She unleashed Howling Howl and blew away Aeryl from their close distance.

By intentionally aiming for simultaneously striking each other, she obtained an effective attack method toward Aeryl who possessed flesh and blood body.

(I cannot lose. I learned our objective with the appearance of the contractor with Avalon.)

Raffi used Avalon's function to re-input the memory of the Automatons.

When they were still alive, the girl called Arshalia transferred their personality and they obtained the important role of protecting the Ruin.

They who were fated to rot from sickness were given hope by her.

They respected Arshalia who was called as the Goddess of Salvation and decided to fight in order to protect the great undertaking she was trying to accomplish.

"Poison was mixed into Sacred Eclipse. The foolish clan of traitor tortured master to remake the system of salvation that was almost finished. A function to detect people harboring ill will and hostility toward the wisher and slaughter those people was inserted into Sacred Eclipse!"

"—!?"

The truth that El Fajura spoke caused Lux and Aeryl to hold their breath.

(Sacred Eclipse was remade due to the clan of traitor? But, it feels like something is out of place.)

The shocking truth was also surprising, but at the same time Lux felt a strange doubt.

But, he wasn't given any time to fall into his thought. Philuffy stepped further into Lux's range.

The inside of the Archive—the rectangular space that was formed from silver metallic wall only had several ornamental support pillars, so there was few obstacles and the ceiling was also low.

Therefore, the wheels extending from the armored legs could function well and became advantageous for land battle type Divine Drag-Ride.

"Kuh, u.....!"

Philuffy vigorously charged while dealing small repeated blows like a hail. He was completely prevented from starting anything.

Right after that, the power of Baptism that she was hiding burst out.

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## Part 7

Around that time, at the surface.

A danger was visiting at a corner of the Ancient Forest where Airi and Triad who were guarding Lisha were staying in hiding.

"—Now then. All traitors must die."

".....Automata!? Why is she here—"

The appearance of an Automata wearing Divine Drag-Ride made Airi's face pale.

An armor shining like a gem—the one wearing the flying type Drag-Ride was La Cruche.

She had a dumb way of speaking just like when they first met at the Arc. However she was directing a clear hostility to Airi and others.

".....I don't get what's going on here? What are you two saying!? What do you mean by traitor!?"

Lisha was bewildered while reaching out to the Sword Device on her waist but, she still hadn't recovered her strength.

She tried to summon her Drag-Ride, but her mind control operation didn't go well and she failed.

Airi who instantly pulled herself back together from her agitation gave her order to the Triad.

"Everyone! Please!"

"Yes. Leave it to us."

"Tillfur, we're going!"

"Alrighty.....uwa. This seems tough."

On the other hand Airi quickly dispelled her own armor and pulled Lisha's hand.

Noct held the two of them with her EX Drake and turned her back on the Automatas before leaping.

Airi had made arrangement before hand with the Triad that in case they were attacked by someone in this situation, they would respond depending on the enemy's strength, even so this was an unexpected happening.

(Through Nii-san I've received the information about the location of Avalon's underground facilities from Aeril-san but—)

The reason why La Cruche suddenly appeared in her radar's reaction at close range must be because she was already on standby beforehand in Avalon's underground facility.

No, more importantly than that, it was bad that Raffi had seen through that she was the traitor.

As expected the Triad wouldn't be a match against the Automata, but Raffi shouldn't do something like expressly reducing the New Kingdom's fighting strength.

The worst case might happen, but she could only pray that wouldn't happen.

(I'm sorry you two! Please be safe—)

Noct was using EX Drake's camouflage to hide while trying hard to take distance from the Automata. And then she was heading to the Archive just as Airi instructed. She flew toward the northeast following after Lux and Aeril.

With that Airi thought that she would be able to buy some time at the very least but—.

"Oi! Put me down! I don't understand what's going on but, if I don't fight together with those two——"

"It's fine, just stay still for now! We have to run away!"

Lisha unsheathed her Sword Device and tried to call Tiamata once more, but Airi desperately stopped her.

It would be bad if Lisha fought.

If Lisha whose stamina still hadn't recovered was defeated by the Automata and fell into Raffi's hand, the Azure Division would be heading far closer to defeat.

Airi was thinking of such thing while entrusting her body to Noct, but then Noct suddenly showed a puzzled expression.

"What's this? This reaction in the radar——m Abyss?"

".....? Is it about the appearance of many Abysses in the Ancient Forest? If it's that we can take detour so we don't bump into them——"

Airi knew about the tactic of Lux releasing Abysses from the production plant and the Azure Division controlling them with horn flute so she wasn't surprised, but Noct was pointing out at something different.

"No, the number is decreasing. The Abysses that numbered more than a hundred are drastically.....at this rate, in several more minutes they will be completely——"

".....-!?"

Airi shuddered hearing the murmur of Noct who was staring at her radar.

There were only several powerful names who were able to overwhelm more than a hundred Abysses in the New Kingdom right now.

(If there is someone who can do this, it would be someone at the level of Nii-san or Yoruka-san.....no, don't tell me Fugil or Queen Raffi is——)



If Lux didn't obtain the hint to defeat them from the Archive before they started moving, then it meant that this battle was already heading toward the checkmate for their side.

"—Airi! Lisha-sama!"

The instant Noct yelled, Airi gasped and her focus was pulled back to reality.

When she looked behind, La Cruche and the Divine Drag-Ride with lustrous armor like a gem she was wearing was approaching right behind them.

"The gist of the situation is surely just like what you're thinking you know? That's why please hand over the princess obediently. If you do that then there won't be any need for any futile killing."

"Kuh....."

Noct immediately stood in La Cruche's way and fired the rare armament the EX Drake was equipped with.

"—Circular Edge!"

Four round blades that were wrapped with energy drew four different trajectories while rotating. They attacked at La Cruche's Divine Drag-Ride.

In addition a second later Noct fired the remaining four Circular Edges with time difference to become an additional attack that was hard to dodge.

But, La Cruche's Divine Drag-Ride was backing away to diagonally right behind while deflecting only three Circular Edges with the long blade she was holding.

".....-!? That was, dodged!?"

Rather than because of La Cruche's precise movement that saw through the best timing and action, Noct was more shocked by how La Cruche was moving just right before she fired Circular Edge.

"Is reading the target's heart that Divine Drag-Ride's ability.....?"

When Airi asked a leading question, La Cruche nodded honestly.

"Well, there is no problem even if it's exposed so I'll answer. My  
Second Sight  
Vouivre's Divine Raiment is True Eyes..... It has the power to see through  
human's heart. Well, I can't read the heart if I don't focus on an opponent  
from close range, and till the end it's only the general thought, so it's not  
almighty but——"

La Cruche said while recovering his posture for the moment, then she  
faced toward Airi and others once more.

"If you understand now that you can't win, I hope you will stop with the  
pointless resistance already. Wounding you all will result in decreasing the  
battle strength of the New Kingdom. Seems like the girls of Syvalles there  
doesn't know about anything but——"

Unlike Airi who knew about Lux's rebellion, Lisha and Noct didn't  
understand why an Automata was taking action as Drag-Knight and why  
she was chasing after them.

But, even so Lisha was about to notice something from this abnormal  
situation.

(What is going on? What's happening in the New Kingdom, in this world  
right now——)

Something was strange, and not only about the existence of the existence  
of the aggressors called Azure Division led by her little sister.  
Alma

"Noct, it's fine already. Let's surrender."

The next instant Airi who was wearing pilot suit spoke about  
surrendering.

But, hearing that Noct shook her head slightly.

"No, please escape Airi. I will hold her back here. I cannot even begin to estimate what is going on. Even so I believe in you."

"Tsu....."

Airi's chest felt hurt seeing the smile that the taciturn Noct showed.

But, right now she could only rely on her kindness.

"Lisha-sama! This way!"

Saying that Airi took Lisha's hand once more and started running.

She grasped the terrain using the radar of Drake she was wearing just now and escaped to the direction of the Archive where Lux was heading.

She was betting on the hope of being able to luckily meet up with Lux, but this was nothing more than an escape in desperation.

"It's unfortunate but, all of you are no match for the current master."

".....-!?"

The sound of Noct fighting reached Airi's ear.

La Cruche read Noct's defense and pried open her barrier with a Blade.

"Wha-!?"

The Blade La Cruche was holding was freely shortening and lengthening. Noct was taken by surprise and her armored shoulder was hit, making her unable to move.

Not letting go of that opening, La Cruche and Vouivre flew toward Airi and Lisha.

"In the end this is the difference of their caliber. Even after obtaining an overwhelming power, master didn't turn prideful and won the battle of wits after reading her opponent's strategy. Just like this time."

"What are you saying huh this piece of junk robot! Shit!"

Lisha pulled out Tiamat's Sword Device and gripped it while yelling threateningly.

She should be the first person who received Baptism among the Syvalles members, but because it was a strengthening of her physical ability, there was an effect to Lisha's condition until her body adapted to it.

She was captured and she was resting her exhausted body, but if time passed and she finished recovering, then her weak point until now that was her lack of stamina would be resolved and she would become able to use Over Unit freely.

Airi didn't even have any way of knowing such circumstance, however—she summoned her Drake once more and equipped it, then she made herself as shield so that Lisha wouldn't be taken away.

"I won't let you pass! Please go! Lisha-sama!"

"Tsu.....!? Shit!"

Lisha thought that she would only become a hindrance with her current condition even if she was here. Airi's voice pushed her and she started running.

Airi who didn't have any way to fight even with Drag-Ride on her body wouldn't even be able to buy time, much less fighting. She understood that.

Even so betting on the miracle that Lux would appear if she managed to hold for a few seconds was—.

"I will erase you if you stand in my way you know?"

If speaking from the conclusion, Lux and Airi wouldn't reunite in this place.

"Tsu.....!"

"Airi!?"

Airi listened to Noct's yell from some distance away while she closed her eyes tightly.

The Blade of Vouivre that La Cruche was using moved toward Airi in a straight line.

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## Part 8

"—This match. This battle of the caliber as king, is Queen Raffi the winner?"

Near the central of Avalon that was moved to Ancient Forest. Queen Raffi who liberated the figure of Sacred Eclipse's main body flew to the sky and devoured the Abysses one after another. While that was going on, the Automata Arshalia looked up to the sky and muttered.

The silver sleet became snow when she noticed. The snow continued to fall silently, as though to hide the bloody slaughter unfolding before her eyes.

Before Raffi obtained strength, she was no more than a woman who could only fear the world.

But, after she fused with Sacred Eclipse, she reacted appropriately even toward the appearance of unexpected enemy and built up her advantage diligently.

She didn't only rely on the Automatas and Avalon that were under her control.

She believed that the enemy was Lux, read his personality, and then responded with the most suitable plan.

She pretended that her own army was being toyed around, identified Airi as the spy from Lux, and sent an assassin to deal with it.

Even in the unlikely chance that Lux won against Philuffy and El Fajura, she had already prepared another Automata to finish him off after that.

Raffi herself was removing the swarm of Abyss, in addition she was stocking up energy.

The fate of rebellion that Lux was trying to carry was already in the verge of ending after just a bit more.

It would be desirable to not kill Lux who right now was the hero of the New Kingdom and had him brainwashed, but Raffi had the resolve to kill him when push comes to shove.

The resolve to cut down the enemy.

The resolve to sever the country's cancer even if she had to dirty her own hand.

The Automata Arshalia was speaking while taking into account such present situation, but,

"Caliber, huh..... Certainly, her majesty the queen is trying to fulfill the trail that is imposed on her to become a king. In regard to her caliber, there is nothing that can be criticized. But——"

In respond to Arshalia's question, Fugil stayed seated on a small boulder while staring straight to the grey colored empty sky.

"I see, so that's your answer huh.....Lux."

".....?"

The words that Fugil suddenly uttered made Arshalia tilted her head.

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## Part 9

—\*GAKIiIN!\*

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The consecutive blows of Philuffy that didn't even give the time for breathing were approaching with a roar.

Unlike Lux's secret technique—End Action, Philuffy's attacks weren't done with no pause in between.

Using armor to punch, kick, grapple, throw, including the Pile Anchor to snipe and reeling in, or perhaps Philuffy herself would move in high speed. Her great variety of attack methods almost gave no room for counterattack or defense.

But, for a human controlling Drag-Ride, such thing was an impossible action.

Since the Drag-Ride was controlled using the body and the mind, the timing when the pilot had to take a breather due to fatigue should arrive without exception, and yet such timing never arrived.

On the contrary the breathing of Lux who was completely on the defensive was running out first. He was becoming unable to dodge the attacks.

At first he thought that the cause of this was the trick of El Fajura's parasitic Drag-Ride Python, but that wasn't it.

Aeril who was watching from the side noticed the reason and called out to Lux.

"Lux-kun! Don't! She won't stop even if you continue defending like that!"



".....!?"

Aeril was enduring the fierce attack of El Fajura's EX Wyvern while barely raising her voice to say that.

"Body control operation, through her whole body—even until the inside of her body.....! That's the power she obtained through Baptism!"

When he looked really close, it was faint, but there were faint geometrical patterns floating on Philuffy's whole body.

Operation of the body.

Most human tended to think that they were able to do that skillfully enough without focusing into it, but unexpectedly the number of body function that could be completely controlled by human's own will was limited.

Reflex, immunity, sweating, etc. They would be carried out outside of the consciousness responding to the situation. They couldn't be controlled by human's own will.

"If she become able to completely control her bodily function and the power of Abyss—. She will be able to hold her breath far longer than normal human, her body's flexibility and endurance too—"

The people who were turned into Nocturnal by Elixir in the past used their Drag-Ride in a way that didn't take into account of the burden on their body.

Philuffy similarly inserted that into her tactic and drove Lux into corner.

(So it's, like that.....!)

The bodily control that Philuffy obtained from Baptism.

There was no doubt that it ascended her strength by one rank, but he was feeling a strength that he still unable to see the bottom of it.

Supposing that Philuffy obtained strength, would it end with just that?

"It's pointless even if you know that. You two won't win against her and me! We have the duty to believe on Sacred Eclipse—on master and protect Avalon and the Ruins. For the sake of this world's peace!"

The surrounding of EX Wyvern that El Fajura was equipping summoned additional armor.

Over Limit—the final form after the Drag-Ride's limiters were taken off. She prepared to end the match.

"Kuh—!"

"Are you planning to challenge me with a broken whip, you fool."

Aeril who swept aside the medium sized Blade took her Breath Whip into her hand.

The special armament was half destroyed through the process of backing up Lux several times, but it was the weapon she was most skilled in and she resolved herself to make her last stand with it.

"I have to protect..... If I use this strength, surely.....can become free"

On the other hand Philuffy was wishing for something within her blank mind.

She was surely intending to draw out all her strength for the sake of protecting the New Kingdom.

(I can't let her.....! I won't let Phi-chan get taken away by them!)

Even though Lux wished that she would forget about someone like him who might die doing this.

Even though he didn't want her to risk her life for his sake.

He wondered why he was feeling this hurt because her heart was snatched away by other.

He knew—no, he already knew since long time ago.

Bahamut's frame was creaking from the accumulated damage. The movement of every part was gradually dulling.

Why he didn't want Philuffy to be touched by anyone?

Why was he wanting for her to stay as she was forever?

(I, didn't want her to change. I wished that, my heart's only support would stay as it was.....)

He intended to protect Philuffy while actually he was depending on her.

He didn't notice, pretended to not notice the affection she was directing to him.

Lux's Divine Raiment Reload on Fire and the three secret techniques of Drag-Knight control were sealed because she was pressing on Lux without giving him time to take even a breath.

It was possible in theory, but he didn't think that there would be a Drag-Knight in reality who would be able to do that.

Lux was in an unfavorable situation where his defeat was highly likely, even so he continued to endure.

With his own power of foresight that was also strengthened by Baptism he was barely avoiding from getting hit by lethal blow.

(Just a bit more, and I'll be able to memorize Typhon's current movement. If I can predict her aim, I'll have to take her down with one attack. In order to not let Philuffy use Abyss's power even more than this too—)

"Tsu.....haa!"

Philuffy seemed to reach her limit. Her breathing was getting faster, and the momentum of her attack was slightly slackening.

Lux who saw that through diverted the fist that Typhon unleashed with the edge of his Blade, parrying it.

In order to land a slash of Quick Draw on the back of her defenseless shoulder, he gathered strength for an instant. In that instant—.

"Lu.....chan?"

"Tsu.....!?"

When Philuffy who was making a hollow expression slipped out that word, the inside of Lux's head became pure white.

Did she recover her consciousness? Or was it perhaps just her reflexive muttering?

What happened with the power of Abyss planted inside her body? If she spread Yggdrasil's root into her Drag-Ride, then the effect—.

Right after he harbored such hesitation for an instant, Typhon's straight punch pierced Bahamut.

"U, ah!"

It couldn't be defended even when he immediately strengthened the barrier.

He crashed on the metal wall at the direction where he was blown away. His breathing stopped from the impact running through his whole body.

He barely avoided from having his armor dispelled, but he couldn't continue.

For several seconds from here, he wouldn't be able to do anything except receiving his opponent's attack fully.

But, if Philuffy just now was recovering her awareness—.

"....."

"Phi.....chan?"

There wasn't any change at Philuffy's condition.

She was looking down on Lux with a blank gaze and lifted up Typhon's huge fist.

"You got caught by that huh, fool. That was my plan that the current master ordered me to do."

"——"

The words of El Fajura who was crossing swords with Aeryl stupefied Lux for an instant.

This flow of battle—everything until Lux's counterattack was dodged was the scheme of Raffi who was manipulating Philuffy.

The real strength of Lux who had defeated numerous powerful enemies until now—its source was his mental strength. In order to seal that, Raffi used Philuffy.

(Is this, my defeat..... Your majesty Raffi, you're really formidable—)

But, if Philuffy wasn't bound by Ragnarok's power and she could be safe, then that was also fine, Lux thought.

If there was one regret that he still had it was,

(Lisha, sama.....)

The girl who he believed and entrusted his own kingship to—.

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## Part 10

—At the same time, inside a room of a certain hideout located at the royal capital Lordgalia.

A man and a woman were sitting in front of the fireplace inside the room of that building that was made to look like an empty house.

"Is it really alright? Magialca-sama—"

"What is it Lolotte? Is it about me not letting you to go assisting them?"

The servant youth who was aiding Magialca who was confined on wheelchair—Lolotte asked a question. In respond his master answered him.

Magialca who was cooperating with Lux behind the scene under the name of Azure Division gave him as much support as she could. Now she was looking up at the cloudy sky that was visible from the curtain's gap.

"No, I mean about.....entrusting everything to him. To begin with, I'm also puzzled about your involvement with this battle....."

The question of Lolotte who was her aide and also her loyal follower was only natural if it was considered objectively.

Certainly it was a great threat to the world but, it was unthinkable that they would be able to win against Raffi who fused with Sacred Eclipse and Fugil who owned Uroboros.

Magialca's rash gamble by supporting Lux that she even braved danger when she was already thought to be dead was something that Lolotte couldn't support.

But, the female master who he trusted, she smiled fearlessly even in her appearance that was covered with bandages.

"You're really distrusting even though we have known each other for long. Have my bet regarding business ever missed when I thought that this is the one?"

".....But, I don't know if it's Sir Singlen, that young man is too clean. Against Queen Raffi who is using every method in the book both as a statesman and as someone standing above others——"

Queen Raffi obtained strength that was equal or surpassing Lux by fusing with Sacred Eclipse.

In contrast Lux was challenging a battle of defeating Sacred Eclipse and Fugil in a way that anyone wouldn't notice. It was something that was just too difficult.

Looking at the whole, Lolotte was judging that Lux had no chance of victory.

"You really don't get it. Why do you think I sent the Seven Dragon Paladins who hasn't recovered their memory—who are unable to free themselves from the binding of world revision to the Ancient Forest?"

".....?"

Her aide tilted his head in puzzlement. Magialca continued with a malicious smile.

"You see, that's because that man.....Lux is a heroic figure who isn't inferior compared to Singlen or Raffi. That man would look at someone, talk to them, and face them even if he has to risk his life without running away or feeling irked by the troublesome effort. That's exactly why the powerful people allied themselves with him. That's exactly——"

The kingship that Lux was aiming and looking for until now.

It was a disposition of king that was different from Raffi and Singlen. A king's disposition of his own.

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## Part 11

".....-!?"

The Blade of Vouivre that was worn by La Cruche was swung down. Airi shut her eyes from fear of death.

However, not only Airi's body, even the armor of the Drake she was wearing didn't feel any impact.

When she fearfully opened her eyes, a completely unexpected sight was unfolding there.

".....Looks like, we made it in time eeh"

"You're——!?"

The eyes of Noct who was fixing up her Drag-Ride at some distance away spontaneously snapped wide open.

The one who stopped Vouivre's Blade using a large scythe——

Dragon Horn Curved Blade

Scythe and protected Airi was a red haired girl wearing dark grey huge armor.

"Rosa Granhide!? Why are you here?"

La Cruche asked with a dubious face while pushing the Blade that was locked with the scythe.

In respond Rosa parried it with her Scythe along with a dangerous smile.

"That's my line. I don't know what's going on but, if you're attacking Lux-sama's little sister, then obviously I'll protect her. You yourself, are you prepared?"

Rosa's crimson eyes glared and she threatened.



In respond La Cruche gazed at the Seven Dragon Paladins opposing her with a bitter expression.

"How unexpected. An unplanned opponent appear at this kind of place—. But, it's still....."

Even while shocked La Cruche sent her thought to her fellow Automata.

Re Plica who was apprehending Alma was heading to deal the finishing blow to Lux.

"Hmph. Well, fine then. I'm sure it will also go well over there."

La Cruche tilted her head at Rosa's meaningful smile.

She didn't understand the meaning of that smile at this time.

But, something was also occurring at a place some distance away from there.

.

"What are you coming here for desu? <sup>omae</sup>you—"

At the same time, Soffice Xfer who came along with Rosa into the Ancient Forest was also facing the Gear Leader of the seventh Ruin the Moon, the Automata Re Plica.

On the armored arm of the golden colored Divine Drag-Ride Vritra worn by Soffice was Alma who she snatched from Re Plica.

"you are....., no, <sup>omae</sup>you are—?"  
<sup>anata</sup>

"Yep, it's Soffice. The Seven Dragon Paladins of Turkimes Confederation and Lux's bosom friend, perhaps."

Alma didn't know what to say toward the brown skinned girl who was indifferently talking with her peculiar expressionless face.

"Why did you, save me——?"

"I heard from Magialca that you are my bosom friend's——Lux's comrade. Also, I have a business with the Automata in front of me."

Soffice too still hadn't recovered her memory before the world revision.

But, she was starting to vaguely get an inkling of something out of place that was going on in this Ancient Forest.

"Let's do our best as fellow people who were helped by Lux. Then"

"......-! I'm in your debt!"

Alma who was untied by Soffice started running into a thicket.

Thus, the two Seven Dragon Paladins who were assisting Lux entered battle against the Automatas.

.

## Part 12

"Haa, haa..... Shit! What in the world is that monster?"

Lisha slowly caught her breath while hiding behind a tree.

From afar she could see the countless Abysses flying in the sky and a mysterious flying object devouring them one after another.

New Kingdom camp and Azure Division.

She didn't know which side was coming ahead, but she understood that this wasn't a normal situation.

She got separated from Airi and Noct. It was also difficult to search them in her state that was unable to wear Drag-Ride.

Snow was falling around her and she was feeling really cold.

She would be able to maintain her temperature if she wore Drag-Ride, but at this rate she might freeze to death.

(But, just a bit more and I'll be able to resummon Tiamat. And then—)

She calmed her breathing and strengthened her will.

"—Lux. I'm not going to die until I go back and meet you once more....."

It was like that day five years ago.

Lisha at that time lost everything that she could depend on and fell into despair.

(I was abandoned by father and even my remaining little sister betrayed me—. I lost everything.)

However, now she had Lux.

Her knight that was worthy of trust from the bottom of her heart.

No—Lux was becoming a special existence for her already since a long time ago, perhaps even from that day when he saved her.

"The next time, I meet Lux..... I've got to tell him properly. Actually I want him to be the one telling me but—"

Lisha quietly put her hand on her chest, closed her eyes, and thought of the young man's figure in her mind.

(I've decided. That I will help Haha-ue together with Lux and protect the New Kingdom. That's why, who is going to lose against those guys at this kind of place)

The resolve that was born inside Lisha.

It awakened the power of Baptism and increased her body temperature.

"Yosh, I can do it now! Just you wait! Lux!"

Lisha took a deep breath and lifted her Sword Device to the sky once more.

The flame of hope was blazing in that chest.

.

## Part 13

"Wha——!?"

At the Avalon's facility Archive that was at the underground nearby of Lisha's position.

The fist that Philuffy held up wasn't swung toward Lux.

In exchange, the tip of Pile Anchor was digging into the armor of EX Wyvern that El Fajura was wearing.

The unexpected reality made El Fajura and Lux to open their eyes wide at the same time.

"What're you doing? You——should be my puppet! Why are you aiming at me!?"

It was impossible.

Due to the mental manipulation from Python, the normal awareness and thought should be taken away from Philuffy.

However, El Fajura noticed after this late that she was overlooking Aeryl's existence.

"My bad, it's dispelled already. Python is——"

The parasitic Divine Drag-Ride's armor was crumbling off in pieces from Typhon's armor.

Breath Whip that was slid into the gap of the armor was destroying the armor as though peeling off a thin skin.

Why was since the midway Aeryl was continuing to use a Blade she was holding with one hand?

That was in order to made El Fajura's consciousness forget the existence of the whip she was wielding on the other hand using Zahhak's Divine Raiment—Brain Hack.

Even El Fajura could understand until that far.

But, even with Python peeled off, the target's awareness wouldn't return to normal right away.

Philuffy's mind should be still nothing more than a blank slate.

"I'm not a puppet you know? I am, me. Because Lu-chan, taught me that."

"Tsu.....!?"

By reeling in the wire, El Fajura who was clad in EX Wyvern was pulled toward Typhon in high speed.

At the same time the right fist of Philuffy's Typhon was gathering energy that was tinged with high heat.

"Impossible! I won't lose! For the sake of the master I believe in too!"

El Fajura's EX Wyvern that was using Over Limit was brandishing its Blade even while being pulled.

She aimed to counter Philuffy so they struck each other down at the same time. In that instant,

".....!?"

The armored right wrist that was going to swing down the sword was severed by Bahamut.

—Reload on Fire.

Right after Philuffy's fist stopped, Lux learned that her heart had returned and without delay he activated Bahamut's Divine Raiment.

And then Philuffy too also knew Lux's thought and launched the attack to shave off El Fajura's consciousness without hesitation.

An instantaneous mutual understanding.

They didn't have any detailed arrangement or preparation beforehand.

They were just, if they were fighting together, they would trust each other and acted in a way that would help the other.

(There is no way..... In a state that is almost subconscious, trusting someone else to that degree is just—)

Right after El Fajura was bewildered with the thought of humans that she couldn't comprehend,

.

—\*DO, OooOOOOON!\*

.

Destruction and great heat blew violently along with a thunderous roar that shook the air.

Right after that, Typhon's special armament Biting Flare's super firepower crushed El Fajura along with her armor.

".....Haa, haa"

"—It's, over."

Aeril, Lux, and Philuffy dispelled their armor and stood still on that place.

They were breathing hard while looking at each other's face.

"Philuffy-san, how much do you remember about this battle?"

"Until I came to this forest I think? After that I don't really remember though."

Philuffy vacantly tilted her head at Aeryl's question and answered.

She didn't ask anything about Lux being here when originally he should be waiting back at the inn.

"Lu-chan is going to, beat her majesty?"

"How do you——"

"Because, there was a bit of Abyss's scent from her majesty. Right now I don't really understand though——"

Philuffy who was similarly possessing Ragnarok's factor in herself was surely sensing some kind of change from Raffi.

Now that it had been exposed, there was no meaning in hiding the truth anymore.

The matter of what happened at Guernica two weeks ago.

The matter of three days of the parade that were looped.

The matter of Sacred Eclipse. He told everything to Philuffy.

Including how Lux intended to fight by himself so that everyone of the New Kingdom——Syvalles wouldn't get dragged into it.

"I see. Then, I'll also help out."

"......Wait, that's no good Phi-chan! I can't let you do that."

She and also her big sister Relie had important standing in this country.

He couldn't let them to bear the stigma of being rebel who opposed the New Kingdom.



To say nothing of having her participating in the reckless battle to defeat Fugil and Sacred Eclipse—.

"Besides I also, don't want to put any more burden on Phi-chan.  
Because....."

".....Because of that body that is gnawed by Abyss huh?"

"——!?"

Suddenly El Fajura's head among the wreckage that was scattered below them moved and both its eyes snapped open.

.

——\*IIIIIIII-!\*

.

At the next moment, the sound of horn flute from its mouth resounded inside the Archive.

"Kill that guy you monster! Stab that man's heart with your Sword Device!"

".....-!?"

Lux shuddered at El Fajura's last obsession.

Although Philuffy became able to resist the sound of horn flute through training, if it was used in surprise when she was tired—.

As though to prove that anxiety of Lux and Aeryl, Philuffy immediately pulled out the short sword shaped Sword Device from her sword belt.

And then, she lightly turned around and threw it toward El Fajura.

"Gah.....!?"

El Fajura's head was pierced through and this time she stopped completely.

\*Shin\*.....silence came once more.

"Phi-chan!?"

"I'm, fine. The Abyss inside me already vanished after all."

"Eh——?"

Lux was dumbfounded hearing Philuffy's murmur.

If Lux's memory was correct, he had never seen her lying.

But regardless of that, Lux spontaneously doubted his hearing.

"Ragnarok's, Yggdrasil's seed vanished? How in the world?"

According to Philuffy's explanation, it seemed that the feeling of the seed of Ragnarok remaining inside her body was already gone.

The power of bodily manipulation that she obtained from Baptism.

Ragnarok that was giving Philuffy power while also putting burden on her until now seemed to be used by her to heal her body.

The power to consciously control the body parts that previously couldn't be consciously controlled.

When Raffi suggested the point to be strengthened through Baptism, she thought about it and tested it.

Namely, erasing the seed of Ragnarok that was a part of her body on her own.

Of course, there was also the possibility that she would die from the rejection reaction.

She thought that Lux and Airi would stop her if she told them and so she didn't tell them.

"That's why, Lu-chan don't need to, worry about me anymore you know? There is nothing, that Lu-chan need to worry about because of failure of the past. That's why, I want you to tell me. Help out."

"....."

Lux couldn't say anything.

She already risked her life for his sake.





The same like Lux, for the sake of something important.

"Phi-chan....."

He drew Philuffy's body close and hugged her tightly.

"Yes. I'm okay you know?"

Tears were falling in large drops while he was feeling his childhood friend's warmth, softness, and nostalgic scent.

His feeling toward her that couldn't be described with words was overflowing.

His current feeling couldn't be expressed using any kind of words.

# Epilogue – Princess And Knight

"—Geez, how long you two are going to stay like that? I understand your feeling but, there is no time you know? It looks like this Archive is also breaking down because of the battle with El Fajura."

Only several minutes had passed.

Aeril was making sidelong glance at Lux and Philuffy who kept hugging each other tightly while pouting,

Surely it was something to be thankful for that she would silently watch over them for several minutes in this kind of situation.

Unfortunately, due to El Fajura's obstruction, it seemed that they couldn't hope to obtain more information from here.

"Actually, we should be able to watch the continuation of just now at the Central too but—"

Resignation was vaguely coming from the tone of Aeril who was hesitatingly saying that.

In the end they still couldn't ask about the weak point of Sacred Eclipse as well as Uroboros more than what they knew.

They succeeded in weakening them by the time they stole one of the Grand Forces, but as expected they would have to defeat the Sacred Eclipse one more time.

In order to do that it would be necessary to defeat Raffi, infiltrated into Central, and gave the order for Sacred Eclipse to stop functioning but—.

"There is no one among us who can connect with the Central. But, if we can meet the pseudo personality of Arshalia who was talking with us just now at Central—"

If they could persuade her to move Avalon's Automata Arshalia, it might be possible to stop Sacred Eclipse.

Even though they aimed at this Archive in order to avoid fighting Fugil, in the end they still had to infiltrate into Central.

But, they already couldn't turn back.

They could only confront the battle while avoiding fighting directly against Lisha, Krulcifer, and Sacred Eclipse.

"Then, Phi-chan. See you later."

Lux left behind Aeril and Philuffy and went out of the Archive ahead.

The two of them were greatly exhausted and couldn't move immediately. He also wanted to confirm Airi's safety, so Lux returned to the surface by himself. It was then—.

".....He, Hero-dono!? You are here!?"

"Alma! You yourself, why are you here!?"

Alma who was hiding in a nearby bush showed her face and rushed toward Lux.

Her face was haggard, but he couldn't find any injury on her.

.

"I was under the watch of an Automata, but a Seven Dragon Paladins, a person who introduced herself as Lux's buddy saved me."

"Buddy?"

"She is a girl with black hair and brown skin, and somewhat strange personality."

"Ah, you mean Soffice."



They should be friend, but since when she ranked up into his bosom friend?

He heard how Magialca gave information to Seven Dragon Paladins and guided them to this Ancient Forest, but they didn't know whether they would recover their memory or whether they would become Lux's ally but—it seemed Soffice saved Alma.

"I can, still fight. My Sword Device was taken away but, I can command Azure Division in your place——"

Alma raised her face courageously and muttered that, but strength seemed to leave her legs and she staggered. Lux immediately caught her.

"Don't force yourself, you should rest. For the time being the assassins from her majesty Raffi are dealt with. The pieces of the New Kingdom are now limited. Leave the rest to——....."

Lux's time stopped when he was saying that to Alma.

A girl was standing on the ground slightly ahead where there was the ruin of a broken shrine.

The girl who he was walking together with until now, the one he swore his loyalty to.

It was the princess of the New Kingdom, Lizsharte.

.

"Lu, x.....?"

.

The forgetfulness of the designated memory using Aeryl's Zahhak couldn't be used anymore.

And then right now, he was exchanging words with Alma as Azure Division—as the ringleader who was rebelling in order to destroy the New

Kingdom.

It was only several seconds.

But, within the time that was like an eternity, the snows were fluttering down.

.

The time of the two stopped.

Before long, it started to slowly move.





# Afterword

.

Long time no see. This is Akatsuki.

We finally arrived at volume 17.

Perhaps because I'm doing this kind of work, I'm habitually acting slothful. Normally I also don't really have the chance to talk with anyone other than the editor, even so there is talking situation that leave impression in me.

.

That is, when [a pro of his field] is [commenting about his field passionately], I really like it.

Around seven years ago, when I went to a large furniture shop to choose a large bed, a shop assistant with a position called [sleep advisor] kindly and thoroughly talked to me about what to do in order to obtain a pleasant sleep and how to choose the bedding. The company's salesperson of a massage gadget that I bought recently was also like that.

.

For some reason people look radiant when they happily and confidently display their skill and knowledge that they learned, so I feel really jealous toward them and it's fun watching them.

Similarly I also like talking about my stock of knowledge, but it will also be awkward to talk endlessly while my friends aren't interested and get annoyed, so usually I'll hold myself back.

If there is a situation where I can display my knowledge like in work then I'll be able to speak boldly, but that kind of chance is rare. It's unfortunate.

.

And so, it's the thanks corner.

The new illustrator Murakami Yuichi-sama. Thank you very much for taking over and producing the many high quality illustrations.

.

Well then, it will be great if we can meet again at the next volume.

.

A certain day in December 2018 Akatsuki Senri

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